

An abstract of my presentation is as follows:

While recent observations have documented gray whales (*Eschrichtius robustus*) identified in the western North Pacific (WNP) off Sakhalin Island, Russia, migrating to areas off the coast of North America (Canada, California, Mexico) during the winter/spring, the past and present occurrence of gray whales off Japan and China (and the Korean Peninsula historically) suggest that not all gray whales identified in the WNP share a common wintering ground. Contemporary records of gray whales off Asia are rare, with only 13 from Japanese waters between 1990 and 2007 and 24 from Chinese waters since 1933. The last known record of a gray whale off Korea was in 1977. Although recent observations of gray whales off the coast of Asia are infrequent, they nevertheless continue to occur, including: (1) March 2012 - a gray whale was sighted and photographed in Mikawa Bay (Aichi Prefecture), on the Pacific coast of Honshu, Japan, and (2) November 2011 - a 13 m female gray whale was taken in fishing gear offshore of Baiqingxiang, China, in the Taiwan Strait. Observed genetic differentiation between western and eastern gray whales, in combination with sighting/stranding records from Japan and China during the winter/spring cause us to believe that a relic WNP gray whale population still exists and obtaining information on its present day status off China is of vital importance to conservation objectives.

All Best,

Dave Weller