

Editorial

Welcome to this the Supplement to the twenty-fifth volume of the Journal of Cetacean Research and Management.

This Supplement contains the Report of the Scientific Committee from its meeting held 24 April-6 May 2023 in Bled, Slovenia. The meeting was attended by 254 participants and 31 member nations were represented. It also contains the reports of six intersessional meetings:

- (1) the Report of the Workshop to Finalise the Review of the Franciscana, held 4-5 June 2022 in Curitiba, Brazil;
- (2) the Report of the Abundance Steering Group, held 21-23 April 2023 in Bled, Slovenia;
- (3) the Report of Technical Advisory Workshop on Planning for the Medium-Long Term IWC-POWER Programme, held 6-10 September 2022 in Tokyo, Japan;
- (4) the Report of the IWC-POWER Planning Meeting, held 6-10 September 2022 in Tokyo, Japan;
- (5) the Report of the Workshop on Hector's and Maui Dolphins in New Zealand: Consideration of Spatial Risk Assessment of Threats, held 22-23 April 2023 in Bled, Slovenia; and
- (6) the Report of the Workshop on the Conservation Management Plan for the Southern Right Whale Southwest Atlantic Population, held 1-2 June 2022 in Curitiba, Brazil.

The Commission meeting associated with this Scientific Committee meeting, SC69A, will be held in Lima, Peru in September/October 2024 and will be numbered IWC69. This report and the report of the next Scientific Committee meeting (SC69B, to be held in April 2024 in Bled, Slovenia) will both be presented at the September/October 2024 Commission meeting.

From this year going forwards, there will be a reduction in the interval between a Scientific Committee meeting taking place and subsequent publishing of its report. For this reason, Supplement twenty-five precedes its corresponding volume of the Journal. To achieve expedited publishing of the Supplement, the Annexes to the Committee report will no longer be included, but will be available online, along with other meeting papers, from the IWC documents archive, <https://archive.iwc.int/?r=20108&k=3a01f9e4ae>.

The Scientific Committee report has reverted to its familiar format of a main report to summarise Committee outcomes and recommendations, with sub-group discussions contained in annexes. In 2023 the IWC Scientific Committee meeting also returned to its usual in-person format; the Covid-19 pandemic has prevented in-person Committee meetings since 2019. Whilst the Government of Slovenia did not host the meeting in an official capacity, its gracious help and support was invaluable to its success.

Two meetings were held immediately prior to the Committee meeting: (1) a two-day workshop on New Zealand's implementation of spatial risk assessment management measures for Hector's and Maui dolphins, which considered independent expert reviews (SC/69A/REP/04); and (2) a three-day pre-meeting of the Abundance Steering Group, which reviewed abundance estimates and progress on recommendations (SC/69A/REP/02). The reports of both meetings were considered during the Committee meeting.

The meeting was structured as for previous in-person meetings; an opening day of Plenary sessions followed by eight days of sub-group meetings. The traditional 'rest day' was set aside for consolidating text, prior to three final days of Plenary. Given the pressures on the IWC budget as a whole, and in light of the Commission's 2022 decisions to reduce the SC research budget and move the SC to biennial meetings from 2025, SC budgets were the focus of several Plenary sessions.

This Report of The Scientific Committee was endorsed by the Commission on 30 June 2023, following the 30-day silence procedure adopted at its 2022 meeting, IWC68.

Dr. Iain Staniland
Cambridge, October 2023
Head of Science, Conservation and Management;
Editor of the *Journal of Cetacean Research and Management*

Cover image

The cover image shows the CCS Response Team disentangling a humpback whale off the coast of Massachusetts, USA in 2023. With thanks to Scott Landry and the Center for Coastal Studies.