

SATO'S BEAKED WHALE (*Berardius minimus*)

STOCK DEFINITION AND GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

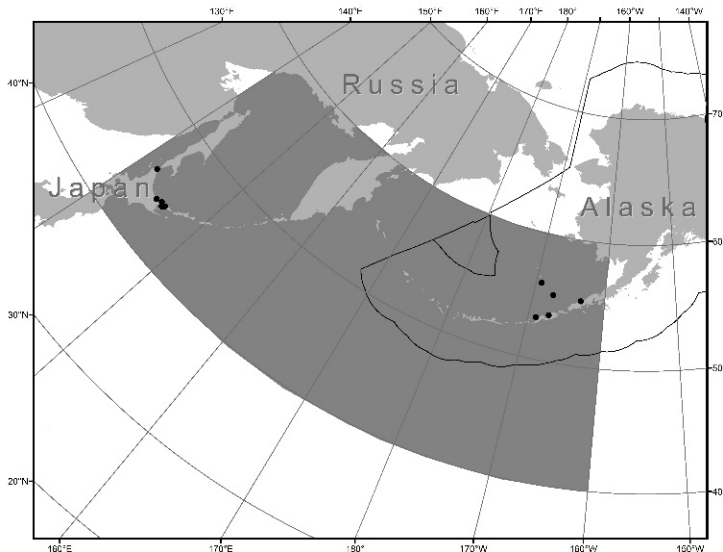


Figure 1. Approximate distribution of Sato's beaked whales in the western and central North Pacific (shaded area). Strandings (black dots) are also depicted (Kitamura et al. 2013, Morin et al. 2017, Yamada et al. 2019). This stock assessment considers only the portion of the stock occurring in U.S. waters (i.e., the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone delineated by a black line).

Sato's beaked whale, or black beaked whale, is a newly described species which inhabits the western and central North Pacific (Fig. 1; Morin et al. 2017, Yamada et al. 2019, Brownell 2020, Fedutin et al. 2020). Reports from Japanese whalers of a "black" beaked whale smaller than the more common Baird's beaked whale and measurements from stranded animals suggested the existence of a separate species (Yamada et al. 2019). Strong genetic differences confirmed it to be distinct from the partly sympatric Baird's beaked whale (Kitamura et al. 2013, Morin et al. 2017, Yamada et al. 2019, Fedutin et al. 2020).

Although the existence of a smaller form of beaked whale off Japan has been suggested for years (Brownell and Kasuya 2021), the first confirmed observation of living Sato's beaked whales was made in 2021 (Fedutin et al. 2022). Twenty-three encounters were made off the west coast of Kunashir Island (the southernmost Kuril Island) from May to June 2021. The species identification was confirmed from one biopsy sample, and fourteen individuals in groups of 4-5 animals were identified from photographs. In 2023, three groups consisting of at least nine total Sato's beaked whales were documented by photographs collected by unmanned aerial vehicles in the Abashiri Submarine Canyon, Hokkaido, Japan (Kobayashi et al. 2023).

Our current information on geographic range comes from relatively few stranded or incidentally caught animals. From skull characteristics and genetics, specimens have been identified in northern Hokkaido, Japan; Sakhalin and Kunshir Islands, Russia; Unalaska Island, Bering Sea; and the Alaska Peninsula, U.S. (Morin et al. 2017, Fedutin et al. 2020). Because our knowledge of distribution is based on relatively few strandings, distribution is uncertain but appears to include waters between 40°N and 60°N, and 140°E and 160°W (Yamada et al. 2019).

This transboundary stock is defined as the *Berardius minimus* species.

POPULATION SIZE

Reliable estimates of population abundance are not available for this stock.

Minimum Population Estimate

It is not possible to produce a reliable minimum population estimate (N_{MIN}) for this stock, as estimates of abundance are not available.

