Revised 12/15/2000

BRYDE'S WHALE (*Balaenoptera edeni*): Hawaiian Stock

STOCK DEFINITION AND GEOGRAPHIC RANGE

Bryde's whales occur in tropical and warm temperate waters throughout the world. Shallenberger (1981) reported a sighting of a Bryde's whale southeast of Nihoa in April 1977 (see DeLong and Brownell 1977; Leatherwood et al. 1982: Fig. 39c). Leatherwood et al. (1982) described the species as relatively abundant in summer and fall on the Mellish and Miluoki banks northeast of Hawaii and around Midway Islands, but the basis for this statement was not explained. Ohsumi and Masaki (1975) reported the tagging of "many" Bryde's whales between the Bonin and Hawaiian Islands in the winters of 1971 and 1972 (Ohsumi 1977). With presently available evidence, there is no biological basis for defining separate stocks of Bryde's whales in the central North Pacific. Bryde's whales also occasionally occur off southern California (Morejohn and Rice 1973). For the MMPA stock assessment reports, Bryde's whales within the Pacific U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone are divided into two areas: 1) Hawaiian waters (this report), and 2) the eastern tropical Pacific (east of 150°W and including the Gulf of California and waters off California).

POPULATION SIZE

Tillman (1978) concluded from Japanese and Soviet CPUE data that the stock size in the North Pacific pelagic whaling grounds, mostly to the west of the Hawaiian Islands, declined from approximately 22,500 in 1971 to 17,800 in 1977. An estimate of 13,000 (CV=0.202) Bryde's whales was made from vessel surveys in the eastern tropical Pacific between 1986 and 1990 (Wade and Gerrodette 1993). The area to which this estimate applies is mainly east and somewhat south of the Hawaiian Islands, and it is not known whether these animals are part of the same population that occurs around the Hawaiian Islands. As part of the Marine Mammal Research Program of the Acoustic Thermometry of Ocean Climate (ATOC) study, a total of twelve aerial surveys were conducted within about 25 nmi of the main Hawaiian Islands in 1993, 1995 and 1998 (Mobley et al. 2000). No sightings of Bryde's whales were made, and therefore no abundance estimate is available for Hawaiian waters.

Minimum Population Estimate

No data are available for a minimum population estimate.

Current Population Trend

No data are available on current population trend.

CURRENT AND MAXIMUM NET PRODUCTIVITY RATES

No data are available on current or maximum net productivity rate.

POTENTIAL BIOLOGICAL REMOVAL

No PBR can be calculated for this stock at this time.

HUMAN-CAUSED MORTALITY AND SERIOUS INJURY

Fishery Information

No estimate of annual human-caused mortality and serious injury is available as there are no reports of recent direct or incidental takes of Bryde's whales in Hawaiian waters. However, mortality of other cetacean species has been observed in Hawaiian fisheries, and the gear types used in these fisheries are responsible for marine mammal mortality and serious injury in other fisheries throughout U.S. waters. Gillnets are used in Hawaiian waters and appear to capture marine mammals wherever they are used, and float lines from lobster traps and longlines can be expected to occasionally entangle whales (Perrin et al. 1994).

Interactions with dolphins are reported for all pelagic fisheries, and humpback whales have been entangled in longlines off the Hawaiian Islands (Nitta and Henderson 1993), but no takes of Bryde's whales have been documented. None were observed hooked or entangled in the Hawaiian longline fishery between 1994 and 1998, with approximately 4.4% of all effort (measured as the number of hooks fished) observed (Kleiber 1999).

Historical Mortality

Small numbers of Bryde's whales were taken near the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands by Japanese and Soviet

whaling fleets during the early 1970s (Ohsumi 1977). Pelagic whaling for Bryde's whales in the North Pacific ended after the 1979 season (IWC 1981), and coastal whaling for this species ended in the western Pacific in 1987 (IWC 1989).

STATUS OF STOCK

The status of Bryde's whales in Hawaiian waters relative to OSP is unknown, and there are insufficient data to evaluate trends in abundance. They are not listed as "threatened" or "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act (1973), nor as "depleted" under the MMPA. Although information on Bryde's whales in Hawaiian waters is limited, this stock would not be considered strategic under the 1994 amendments to the MMPA because there has been no reported fisheries related mortality. The total fishery mortality and serious injury for Bryde's whales is zero and therefore can be considered to be insignificant and approaching zero mortality and serious injury rate. The increasing levels of anthropogenic noise in the world's oceans has been suggested to be a habitat concern for whales.

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