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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). A summer/fall 2002 shipboard survey of waters within the U.S. Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) of the Hawaiian Islands resulted in 13 Bryde's whale sightings throughout the study area (Figure 1; Barlow 2006).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. EEZ are divided into two areas: 1) Hawaiian waters (this report), and 2) the eastern Pacific (east of 150°W and including the Gulf of California and waters off California). The Hawaiian stock includes animals found both within the Hawaiian Islands EEZ and in adjacent international waters; however, because data on abundance, distribution, and human-caused impacts are largely lacking for international waters, the status of this stock is evaluated based on data from U.S. EEZ waters of the Hawaiian Islands (NMFS 2005).

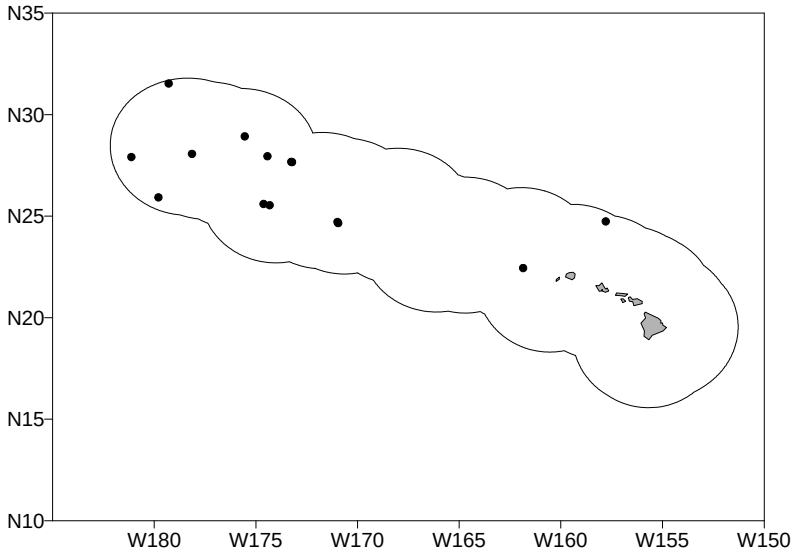

Figure 1. Bryde's whale sighting locations during the 2002 shipboard survey of U.S. EEZ waters surrounding the Hawaiian Islands (Barlow2006; see Appendix 2 for details on timing and location of survey effort). Outer line represents approximate boundary of survey area and U.S. EEZ.

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. A 2002 shipboard line-transect survey of the entire Hawaiian Islands EEZ resulted in an abundance estimate of 469 (CV=0.45) Bryde's whales (Barlow 2006). This is currently the best available abundance estimate for this stock.

Minimum Population Estimate

The log-normal 20th percentile of the 2002 abundance estimate (Barlow 2006) is 327 Bryde's whales within the Hawaiian Islands EEZ.

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

The potential biological removal (PBR) level for this stock is calculated as the minimum population size within the U.S EEZ of the Hawaiian Islands (327) times one half the default maximum net growth rate for cetaceans (½ of 4%) times a recovery factor of 0.50 (for a stock of unknown status with no known fishery mortality or serious injury within the Hawaiian Islands EEZ; Wade and Angliss 1997), resulting in a PBR of 3.3 Bryde's whales per year.

HUMAN-CAUSED MORTALITY AND SERIOUS INJURY

Fishery Information

Information on fishery-related mortality of cetaceans in Hawaiian waters is limited, but the gear types used in Hawaiian fisheries are responsible for marine mammal mortality and serious injury in other fisheries throughout U.S. waters. Gillnets appear to capture marine mammals wherever they are used, and float lines from lobster traps and longlines can be expected to occasionally entangle cetaceans (Perrin et al. 1994). Interactions with cetaceans are reported for all pelagic fisheries, and large whales have been entangled in longline gear off the Hawaiian Islands (Nitta and Henderson 1993, Forney 2009). There are currently two distinct longline fisheries based in Hawaii: a deep-set longline (DSLL) fishery that targets primarily tunas, and a shallow-set longline fishery (SSLL) that targets swordfish. Both fisheries operate within U.S. waters and on the high seas. Between 2004 and 2008, one Bryde's whale was observed hooked or entangled in the SSLL fishery (100% observer coverage) in international waters (McCracken & Forney 2010). Based on an evaluation of the observer's description of the interaction and following the most recently developed criteria for assessing serious injury in marine mammals (Andersen et al. 2008), this animal was considered not seriously injured (Forney 2009). No Bryde's whales were observed hooked or entangled the DSLL fishery (20-28% observer coverage).

Table 1. Summary of available information on incidental mortality and serious injury of Bryde's whales (Hawaiian stock) in commercial fisheries, within and outside of the Hawaiian Islands EEZ (McCracken & Forney 2010). Mean annual takes are based on 2004-2008 data unless otherwise indicated; n/a = not available.

Fishery Name	Year	Data Type	Percent Observer Coverage	Mortality and Serious Injury outside of U.S. EEZ			Mortality and Serious Injury within Hawaiian Islands EEZ		
				Observed	Estimated (CV)	Mean Annual Takes (CV)	Observed	Estimated (CV)	Mean Annual Takes (CV)
Hawaii-based deep-set longline fishery	2004	observer data	25%	0	0 (-)	0 (-)	0	0 (-)	0
	2005		28%	0	0 (-)		0	0 (-)	
	2006		22%	0	0 (-)		0	0 (-)	
	2007		20%	0	0 (-)		0	0 (-)	
	2008		22%	0	0 (-)		0	0 (-)	
Hawaii-based shallow-set longline fishery	2004	observer data	100%	0	Same as observed	0.2	0	Same as observed	0
	2005		100%	0*			0		
	2006		100%	0			0		
	2007		100%	0			0		
	2008		100%	0			0		
Minimum total annual takes within U.S. EEZ waters									0

*One animal observed not seriously injured.

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. It is not listed as "threatened" or "endangered" under the Endangered Species Act (1973), nor as "depleted" under the MMPA. Given the absence of recent fishery-related mortality or serious injuries within the Hawaiian Islands EEZ, the Hawaiian stock of Bryde's whales is not considered strategic under the 1994

amendments to the MMPA, and the total fishery mortality and serious injury can be considered to be insignificant and approaching zero. The increasing level of anthropogenic noise in the world's oceans has been suggested to be a habitat concern for whales (Richardson et al. 1995).

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