

Project Update: December 2012

Our project is now almost complete. We have finished the analysis and currently we work to inform the stakeholders and the public about the differences between fish-eating and mammal-eating orcas. On 4th December 2012, I gave a talk at the annual meeting of the Russian Marine Mammal Council. My report emphasised the need to assess the abundance of killer whales separately for fish-eating and mammal-eating orcas. I have also claimed that the estimate of 2.5-3 thousand killer whales in the Okhotsk Sea, calculated by VNIRO (All-Russian Research Institute of Fisheries and Oceanography), violated generally accepted standards of marine mammal accounts and did not consider the separation of fish-eating and mammal-eating killer whales. The reaction of the Council to the report was generally positive, but faced strong opposition from Dr. A.I. Boltnev (VNIRO). Dr. Boltnev said that the fish-eating and mammal-eating specialisation of killer whales was the result of individual strategies and questioned the results of our analysis. We plan to publish our results in a peer-reviewed scientific journal to convince the old-style Russian marine biologists of the relevance of our results.