

Scientific Life of Dr. Seiji Ohsumi 12 July 1930 – 2 November 2019

We very much regret to inform you that Dr. Seiji Ohsumi aged at 89, Chairman of the Publication Committee unfortunately died at 7:55 PM on November 2, 2019 due to an acute myocardial infarction.

Dr. Ohsumi had been one of the leading members of the IWC/SC for very long time through the 1960's to the 2010's, serving as head of the Japanese delegation to the IWC/SC during many years in 1990s.



Dr. Seiji Ohsumi was born on July 12, 1930 in Gunma Prefecture, the center of Japan. He had been a temporary member of the Whales Research Institute while he was a graduate student of the Faculty of Agriculture at the University of Tokyo. Subsequently he became a permanent scientist in 1958. In his early days at the WRI he was mainly engaged in field science at numerous places where whaling occurred as well as laboratory analyses under the supervision of the late Professor Masaharu Nishiwaki (senior scientist at WRI, former Director general of Ocean Research Institute, University of Tokyo) and the late Dr. Hideo Omura (Director general of WRI). In this way he gained biological knowledge about both large and small cetaceans. His first paper in English was published in the

Scientific Report of WRI in 1954 [9:165-177] under his original name of Seiji Kimura (Ohsumi) and was titled “On the sexual maturity of the sei whale of the Bonin waters”.

His Ph.D. thesis submitted to the University of Tokyo, examined age determination with a focus on fin whales and titled “*A study on age determination of the fin whale*”, in which he found and confirmed annual deposition rate of growth layer in fin whale earplugs, which was one of most important issues in stock management of fin whales.

Dr. Seiji Ohsumi moved to a government fisheries laboratory in May 1966 and was assigned head of cetacean population studies at the Far Seas Fisheries Research Laboratory (currently, National Research Institute of Far Seas Fisheries) in August 1967. He served as director general at FSFRL from October 1988 to March 1991.

After retirement as a government scientist, he was nominated as a trustee on the board directors of the Institute of Cetacean Research, Tokyo in April 1991. Subsequently, he was nominated as the director general of the ICR in December 1995. He continued to serve in the position of director general until December 2003.

Subsequently Dr. Ohsumi was nominated as a senior scientific adviser in January 2004, and as an honorary scientific adviser in October 2015. He remained in that position until November 2019 and continued to travel from his home in Shinjuku to the ICR almost daily until November 1, 2019. Seiji always said that “I continue to go to the office each day because this is my eternal mission.”

During the period through the 1950s to the 2010s, he made tremendous scientific works and published numerous scientific articles on cetaceans over 500 papers. One of his important papers was on the school structure of sperm whales titled “Some investigations on the school structure of sperm whale (*Scientific Report of WRI*, 23:1-25.)”. During his academic years he has received numerous numbers of awards including the Royal Norwegian Order of Merit and Special Award of the Mammal Society of Japan.

His public memorial service was held at 13:00 on December 23, 2019 at the Mariners Court Hotel Tokyo (Harumi, Tokyo), co-hosted by the Institute of Cetacean Research, Seiji Ohsumi’s family and friends. The chief mourners were Dr. Yoshihiro Fujise (Director general of ICR), Dr. Masako Osumi (wife, Professor Emeritus, Japan Women’s University) and Professor Noriko Osumi (daughter, Professor at the Medical school of Tohoku University).

December 27, 2019

Hidehiro Kato

Alternate Chair of CPOPS Publication Committee