



MarLIN

Marine Information Network

Information on the species and habitats around the coasts and sea of the British Isles

Sei whale (*Balaenoptera borealis*)

MarLIN – Marine Life Information Network
Marine Evidence-based Sensitivity Assessment (MarESA) Review

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A report from:

The Marine Life Information Network, Marine Biological Association of the United Kingdom.

Please note. This MarESA report is a dated version of the online review. Please refer to the website for the most up-to-date version [<https://www.marlin.ac.uk/species/detail/103>]. All terms and the MarESA methodology are outlined on the website (<https://www.marlin.ac.uk>)

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See online review for
distribution map

Distribution data supplied by the Ocean
Biogeographic Information System (OBIS). To
interrogate UK data visit the NBN Atlas.

Researched by	Morvan Barnes	Refereed by	Admin
Authority	Lesson, 1828		
Other common names	-	Synonyms	-

Summary

🔍 Description

Balaenoptera borealis is a baleen whale and can be recognised as such by the plates of baleen (rather than teeth) suspended from the upper jaw and the two blowholes on the upper body. The sei whale is slender bodied and can reach up to 16 m in length. It is a member of the rorqual family with the characteristic ventral pleats of skin under the eye and the relatively flat and broad jaw. The ventral pleats do not extend up to the navel but end near the pectoral fin. The flippers are a uniform dark colour and the upper body is a uniform blue-grey colour. The sei whale has a dorsal fin rising at a steep angle on the back. It has a single prominent ridge on the snout.

📍 Recorded distribution in Britain and Ireland

Occasionally seen off the coasts of north and north-west Scotland and west Ireland but one sighting also puts it off the west coast of devon.

📍 Global distribution

-

Habitat

The sei whale is an open ocean whale, not often seen near the coast. It can be found at the surface or diving down to a few hundred metres.

↓ Depth range

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Q Identifying features

- Up to 16 m in length.
- Uniform dark blue-grey dorsal and lateral colouration; white underneath.
- Thick tail base.
- Tall, steep dorsal fin on posterior third of the back.
- Between 32-62 ventral pleats ending before the navel.
- Longest ventral pleat ends past flippers.

Additional information

At a glance, the sei whale can be easily be confused with the minke whale *Balaenoptera acutorostrata* but can be distinguished by having dark coloured flippers and a uniform blue-grey upper body. The sei whale can also be differentiated from Bryde's whale *Balaenoptera edeni* by having only a single prominent ridge on the rostrum.

Sei whales usually congregate in small groups of up to 5 individuals, although in feeding areas up to 30 have been seen together. It seldom breeches, and when diving, it does not show the tail flukes. It can remain submerged for up to 20 minutes (Kinze, 2002).

✓ Listed by



Further information sources

Search on:



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