



MarLIN

Marine Information Network

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

Sowerby's beaked whale (*Mesoplodon bidens*)

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

Morvan Barnes

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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/109>]. All terms and the MarESA methodology are outlined on the website (<https://www.marlin.ac.uk>)

This review can be cited as:

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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	(Sowerby, 1804)		
Other common names	-	Synonyms	-

Summary

Description

Mesoplodon bidens is a toothed whale and can be recognised as such by the single blowhole and the presence of teeth (rather than baleen). It is a member of the beaked whale family with the characteristic V-shaped crease on the throat and the short dorsal fin set relatively far back. Sowerby's beaked whale is a small beaked whale that can reach up to 5.5 m in length. The lower jaw has a single pair of teeth (exposed only in adult males). The forehead rises at a shallow angle and has a slight bump. It has a distinct beak and the mouthline is curved down at rear. Sowerby's beaked whale has a charcoal grey dorsal and lateral colouration with a lighter belly. Adults may also have light grey spots on the body and are often covered with scratches and scars.

Recorded distribution in Britain and Ireland

Recorded at various locations in the British Isles but most commonly seen off the north coasts of Scotland and north-east England.

Global distribution

-

 **Habitat**

Sowerby's beaked whale is an oceanic and coastal species that may be seen at the surface but little is known on what depth they may dive to.

 **Depth range**

-

 **Identifying features**

- Up to 5.5 m in length.
- Small dorsal fin two-thirds down the body.
- Distinct, relatively long beak.
- Small head with shallow rising forehead with a small bump.
- Pair of V-shaped throat grooves.
- Mouthline curved down at the rear.

 **Additional information**

Sowerby's beaked whale may be confused with True's beaked whale *Mesoplodon mirus* but can be recognised by a slight bump on the forehead and a slightly longer beak. Sowerby's beaked whales are usually found either alone or in groups of up to 10 individuals. Little is known about their behaviour although tail-slapping has been recorded. Dives may last up to 15 minutes long (Kinze, 2002).

 **Listed by** **Further information sources**

Search on:



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