



MarLIN

Marine Information Network

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

Pygmy sperm whale (*Kogia breviceps*)

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/121>]. 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	(de Blainville, 1838)		
Other common names	-	Synonyms	-

Summary

Description

Kogia breviceps is a toothed whale and can be recognised as such by the single blowhole and the presence of teeth. It is an easily recognisable small whale with a stocky body reaching up to 4 m in length. It has a large and distinctly square upper jaw which projects above the narrow lower jaw. The blowhole is positioned at the front of the head and directed forward obliquely. A small dorsal fin is present two-thirds down the body and the tail flukes are small. The flippers are almost spear-shaped. The body is blue-black to charcoal grey in colour, while the underside is white and the inside of the mouth and the lips are white. There is often a crescent-shaped, light mark between the eye and the flipper.

Recorded distribution in Britain and Ireland

Only a few sightings off the east coasts of Scotland and England.

Global distribution

-

 **Habitat**

The pygmy sperm whale is an oceanic deep-sea species that may dive down to a few hundred metres in depth.

 **Depth range**

-

 **Identifying features**

- Up to 4 m in length.
- Small dorsal fin two-thirds down the body.
- The flippers are spear-shaped.
- Moderately large square head with projecting lower jaw.
- Narrow lower jaw with a white inside colouring to the mouth.
- Forward pointing blowhole at the front left side of the head.
- About 14 peg-like teeth in each side of the lower jaw.

 **Additional information**

Pygmy sperm whales are usually found either alone, or in small groups of up to 5 individuals. The blow is unique amongst whales by being obliquely forward directed. The tail flukes will often appear before a deep dive. Dive duration is unknown (Kinze, 2002). It is often confused with the dwarf sperm whale, *Kogia sima*, but the dwarf sperm whale does not occur in British and Irish waters (Jefferson *et al.*, 1994).

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

Search on:



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Datasets

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