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

A cold water coral (*Lophelia pertusa*)

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/1806]. All terms and the MarESA methodology are outlined on the website (https://www.marlin.ac.uk)

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***Lophelia pertusa* photographed in 1971**
Photographer: Alan J. Southward

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	Frances Peckett	**Refereed by**	Admin
Authority	(Linnaeus, 1758)		
Other common names	-	**Synonyms**	*Lophelia prolifera* (Linnaeus, 1758)

Summary

Description
The coral forms large bushy colonies which can be fixed to the substratum or free. The polyps are translucent and have up to 50 tentacles with obsolete terminal knobs. The colour is white, pink or yellowish. In British and Irish waters, *Lophelia pertusa* colonies occur in groups which are no more than 5-10 m in diameter and often smaller. Individual polyps are connected by their external calcareous skeletons. The skeletons of individual polyps are up to 12 mm in diameter.

Recorded distribution in Britain and Ireland
Recorded mainly off the continental shelf. Most records are from west Scotland and Ireland. Some specimens recorded from deep (ca. 50-100 m) inshore waters in Scotland. Also known from the North Sea attached to oil industry structures.

Global distribution
In the North Atlantic, Mediterranean, along the east and west Atlantic coasts, around the mid-Atlantic islands south to Tristan da Cunha, from southern California and Cobb Seamount in the Pacific, the Indian Ocean and the Macquarie Ridge off New Zealand.

Habitat
Occurs on soft bottoms usually in excess of 150 m and occasionally in shallower inshore waters.

Rarely found attached to solid substrata.

Depth range

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Identifying features

- Forms bushy colonies which are generally no larger than 5-10 m in diameter, but may join together to form larger reefs.
- Polyps have up to 50 tentacles.
- Translucent polyps which are white, pink or yellowish in colour.
- Generally found in areas with strong currents.

Additional information

Lophelia pertusa reefs provide a habitat for a variety of species and the living and dead coral skeletons provide a biodiversity 'hot spot' on the edge of the continental shelf (Jensen & Frederiksen, 1992; Mortensen, 2001). The deep waters where *Lophelia pertusa* reefs occur were undisturbed by human activity until recently. Fishing trawlers are now operating in the deeper water where *Lophelia pertusa* occurs and causing damage to the reefs (e.g., Hall-Spencer *et al.*, 2002). Oil extraction from deeper waters may possibly cause damage to the reefs (see e.g., Roberts, 1997; Rogers, 1997, 1999). The implementation of the Habitats Directive to the limits of the EEZ and the adoption in 1998 of a new Annex to the OSPAR Convention (1992 Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic) may offer an opportunity to protect important deeper water or offshore habitats and species, such as *Lophelia pertusa*. For further information see COR.Lop.

Listed by

Further information sources

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