



# MarLIN

## Marine Information Network

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

# Minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*)

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/1994>]. 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

Dead minke whale stranded at Freshwater West beach,  
Pembrokeshire.

Photographer: Keith Hiscock

Copyright: Dr Keith Hiscock

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

Researched by	Rose Edwards	Refereed by	Admin
Authority	Lacépède, 1804		
Other common names	-	Synonyms	-

## Summary

### 🔍 Description

The Minke is a medium sized whale, sleek in shape, with a very pointed head. It is dark grey to black in colour with a white underside and has white patches behind the head and a bright white band on the outer part of the flippers. Adults reach lengths of 6.75-10 m long and 5 -10 tonnes in weight. The new born calf is ca 2.5 m long and weighs ca 350 kg. There are 30-70 throat grooves that always end before the naval (umbilicus). The dorsal fin is sickle-shaped, and about two-thirds of the way back from the tip of the animal's snout. The tail flukes are a quarter of the animal's length in width, and are not shown when diving. There are 230-360 baleen plates, 12 -20 cm long, in each half of the upper jaw, which are yellowish-white at the front to grey-brown at the rear.

### 📍 Recorded distribution in Britain and Ireland

Recorded along the Atlantic coasts of Britain and Ireland, and the northern and central North Sea, south to the Yorkshire coast. Rare in the English Channel, with localised records in the Irish Sea.

### 📍 Global distribution

Recorded throughout the North Atlantic, Norwegian coast, the White Sea, Iceland, the Faeroes, the northern North Sea, Skagerrak. Occasionally in the Baltic Sea, north African coast, western Mediterranean, west Greenland and the east coast of America.

## Habitat

An open water species, most often seen in coastal and inshore areas but sometimes enters inlets, bays or estuaries.

## ↓ Depth range

-

## Q Identifying features

- Dark grey-black back with a curved dorsal fins and a white band on the outer part of the flippers.
- 30-70 throat grooves present, ending before the naval.
- A double blow hole and short baleen plates present.  
Very pointed head.
- Medium size; up to 10 m long.

## Additional information

The blow is very weak and can be seen at the same time as the dorsal fin appears. Spyhopping and breaching are common for this species, which forms small groups of up to 3 individuals. The Minke can remain submerged for up to 20 minutes (Kinze, 2002).

This whale could be confused at a distance with the Sei whale and the Bryde's whale as they are relatively the same size, however the weak blow of the Minke whale and dorsal fin appearing at the same time as the blow is characteristic. At close range the white bands on the Minke's flippers are diagnostic (Jefferson *et al.*, 1993; Kinze, 2002).

Baleen whales are included in group species action plan under the UK Biodiversity Action Plan (Anon, 1999v). All baleen whales are protected under schedule 5 in the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985. All whales are listed on Annex A of EU Council Regulation 338/97 and therefore treated by the EU as if they are on CITES, Appendix I, thus prohibiting their commercial trade (Anon, 1999v). Whales are listed in Appendix I of CITES, Appendix II of the Bern Convention and Annex IV of the EC Habitats Directive (Anon, 1999v).

## ✓ Listed by



## Further information sources

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