

Minke whale (*Balaenoptera* sp)

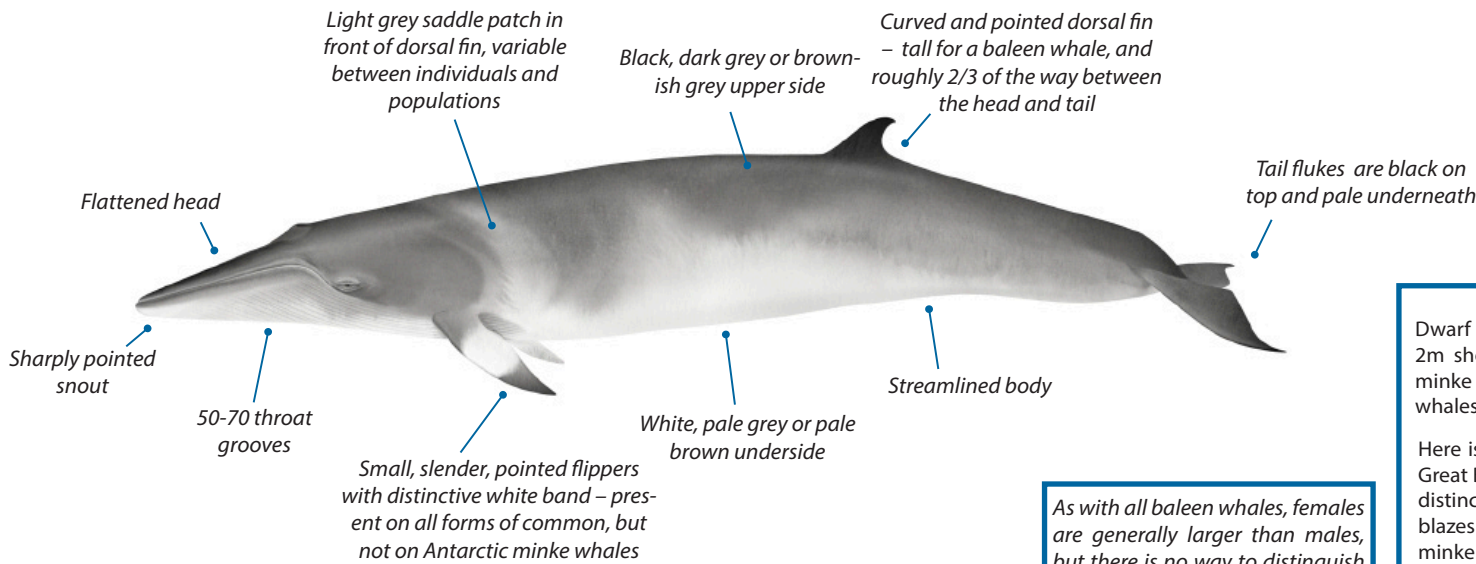
Distribution: Almost world wide (see map below and full list of countries in the detailed species account online at: <https://www.handbook.iwc.int/en/species/minke-whale>)

Common minke whale (*B. acutorostrata*)

Adult length: up to 8.8m (female)

Adult weight: up to 9,100kg (female)

Newborn: 2.4-2.7m /320kg



As with all baleen whales, females are generally larger than males, but there is no way to distinguish them at sea

Threats: entanglement, contaminants

Habitat: continental shelf

Diet: small schooling fish, krill

IUCN Conservation status:

Balaenoptera acutorostrata: **Least Concern**


Balaenoptera bonaerensis: **Data deficient**


Dwarf minke whales are generally 2m shorter than standard common minke whales or Antarctic minke whales.


Here is a Dwarf minke whale on the Great Barrier Reef, Australia. Note the distinctive white shoulder stripes and blazes that are not typical of other minke whale sub-species.



Fun Facts

 Underwater recordings of minke whales reveal a surprising array of vocalizations including sounds described as boings and “Star Wars”.

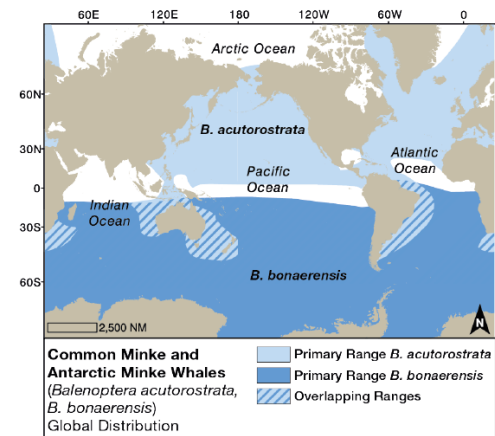
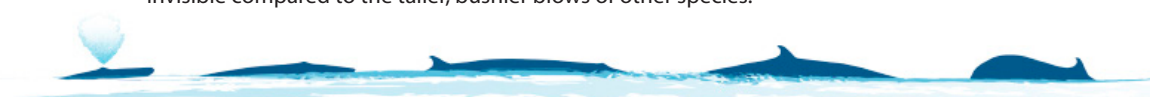
 Minke whales usually eat small schooling fish or plankton, but can occasionally capture and eat fish as big as wolf fish or dogfish

 Minke whales that spend several months in the Antarctic can develop a yellow sheen on their body caused by the growth of a type of algae called diatoms.



Individual minke whales can be recognised by the shape and nicks and marks on their dorsal fins, and in some cases, as with these antarctic minke whales, the patterns on their flanks.

Minke whales are small and streamlined compared to other baleen whales. Their blow is almost invisible compared to the taller, bushier blows of other species.



Minke whale distribution. Adapted by Nina Lisowski from Würsig, B., Thewissen, J.G.M. and Kovacs, K.M. Editors (2018) “Encyclopedia of Marine Mammals”, 3rd ed. Academic Press, Elsevier: San Diego, CA. Copyright Elsevier: <http://www.elsevier.com>

There are two recognised species of minke whales with partially overlapping ranges: The Common minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*), and the Antarctic minke whale (*B. bonaerensis*). Dwarf minke whales are an unnamed subspecies of common minke whale that occurs almost exclusively in the Southern Hemisphere, and North Atlantic and North Pacific minke whales also have separate sub-species designations.