

# Minke Whale

Image courtesy of Robbie Murphy



**Scientific Name:** *Balaenoptera acutorostrata*

**Irish Name:** Droimeiteach beag

The Minke whale is often found alone or in small groups of less than ten. Between April and October, it is commonly seen around Irish coasts, particularly in west and south coasts, where it has been sighted from cliff tops, diving for food. The presence of a Minke whale is often marked by a loud whoosh as it breathes out. Its blow, the water it expels through its blowhole, is rarely seen but reaches about 3 m high.

Whale species are divided into two groups: Toothed Whales and Baleen Whales (see page 10). The Minke whale the smallest of the baleen whales seen in Irish waters. It has a sharply pointed snout and small dorsal fin. The Minke whale has a long ridge on its head, like the fin whale, and white bands on its flippers. The body is dark grey to black in colour with a pale grey to white underside.

### Family

A male whale is known as a bull, a female is a cow and a young whale is called a calf.

The female carries its young for 10 months and gives birth around December/January. She may have one calf every 2 years. A calf weighs about 450 kg when born and measures 2-3 m in length.

The Minke whale can travel through the water at about 30 km per hour. Unlike some other whales, they do not raise their fluke out of the water when diving.

There are three separate populations of Minke whale in the world: North Atlantic, North Pacific and Southern Hemisphere.

### FACT FILE

**Length:** 7-10 m. Females are generally bigger than males.

**Weight:** 5-10 tonnes

**Dive Time:** 6-12 minutes and can stay under for up to 20 minutes.

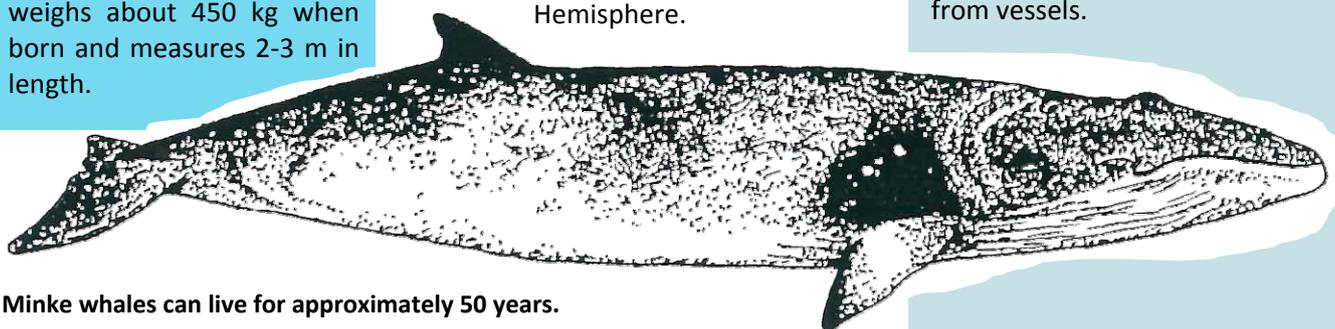
**Diet:** Small fish, squid and krill.

**Distribution:** They are found in most seas around the world.

**Worldwide population size:** 500,000—1,000,000.

#### Threats and Conservation:

The Minke whales in the North Atlantic are not endangered but some populations have been reduce in some areas. The two main predators to Minke whale are killer whales and humans. Humans are a threat through whaling activities, pollution, habitat destruction and impact from vessels.



Minke whales can live for approximately 50 years.

Image courtesy of SIMS/Greg Whittle

© 2019 Sherkin Island Marine Station & its licensors. All rights reserved.