



NOAA FISHERIES SERVICE

Minke Whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*)

Description

Minke whales are small and streamlined with a sharply pointed v-shaped head. They are black or dark gray often with a gray chevron pattern, and a white belly. Minke whales have a characteristic white band across their pectoral flippers. They surface only briefly and their blow is rarely visible.

Habitat and Distribution

Minke whales are widely distributed from tropical to polar waters. Their population structure is complex and they segregate on the basis of age, sex, and reproductive status.

Sounds

Minke whales produce short pulse train vocalizations described as grunts, thuds, rasps, and “boing” sounds. There have been very few simultaneous acoustic recordings and visual observations of minke whales, so there are still many questions about why and how they vocalize.

Feeding

Minke whales feed on a variety of schooling fish (herring, capelin, sand lance) and krill.

Threats

Minke whales are still hunted in Greenland, Japan, and Norway. Additional threats include habitat disturbance, ship strike, bycatch and entanglement in fishing gear, and acoustic disturbance.

Fun Fact

Their common name is supposedly from a novice whaler named Meincke, who called out a sighting of a whale that was too small to be hunted!



Family: Balaenopteridae
Population: < 695,000
Status: Least Concern
Length: 32 – 35 feet
Weight: 4 – 9 tons