

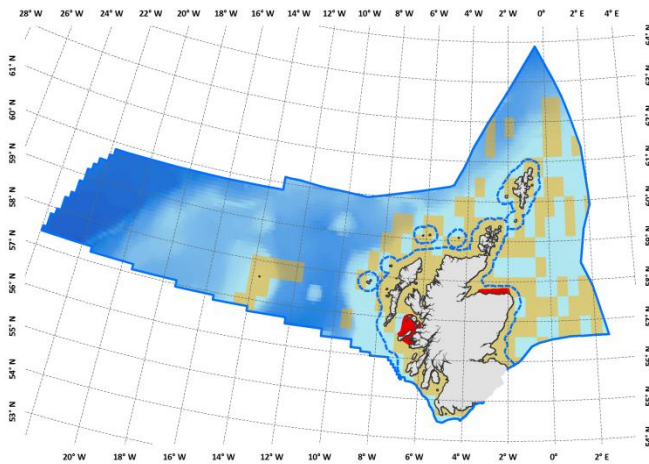
## Minke Whale

### DESCRIPTION

Minke whales are the most common baleen species found all around Scottish coastal waters from May to October, increasing as the season progresses, although some are seen year-round off the Hebrides. The same whales return to Scottish waters year after year. They come into Scottish waters to feed on sand-eels and other fish species, such as herring and sprat. An estimated 60% of the European population is found around the UK, with high densities in Scottish waters. Yet information on minke whale distribution and habitat use is relatively poor. They are the most abundant and the smallest of the rorqual whales, reaching up to 10 metres in length. Their head and body are slender, dark grey to black with grey areas on flanks and a diagonal white band on the flippers. They have a good sized dorsal fin. They may live for 50 years. Minke whales are listed on the Scottish Biodiversity List. They are a Priority Marine Feature and a Search Feature as part of the Scottish marine protected area (MPA) Project.



### DISTRIBUTION MAP



Source reference: Adapted from Clark *et al.*, 2010. (further info from EMODnet.eu). Orange = species observed, Red = critical habitat.

### THREATS

In Scottish waters, at least half of minke whales that strand show signs of entanglement in fishing ropes and lines. Prey depletion (including sand eels) is a considerable concern. Minke whales appear to be vulnerable to noise pollution, including from military activities (west coast exercise area), seismic surveys for oil and gas and possibly pile driving as a result of coastal developments (ports, harbours and marine renewable energy). In the region, minke whales are still hunted by both Norway and Iceland.

### ACTIONS REQUIRED

1. Designation of minke whale MPAs off the Small Isles and in the southern Moray Firth
2. Initiation of efforts to reduce entanglements
3. Improve field data in order to inform wider management decisions and conservation efforts

### FURTHER READING

1. Clark, J., Dolman, S.J. and Hoyt, E. 2010. Towards Marine Protected Areas for Cetaceans in Scotland, England and Wales: A scientific review identifying critical habitat with key recommendations. Whale and Dolphin Conservation Society, Chippenham, UK, 178pp
2. Tetley, M.J. & Dolman, S.J. 2012. Building a case for place-based protection measures of minke whales in Scottish coastal waters: available evidence for two proposed sites in the Southern Trench and Skye-Mull Broadscale Search Areas (BSAs)
3. Tetley, M.J. 2010. The Distribution, Ecological Niche Modelling and Habitat Suitability Mapping of the Minke Whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) within the North Atlantic. Ph.D. Thesis, Ocean Science, Bangor University 2010.
4. [WDC Species Guide](#)
5. WDC, HWDT and CRRU. 2012. Third Party Proposal submitted to the Scottish Government MPA Project.

### MSP SPECIES CHAMPION



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