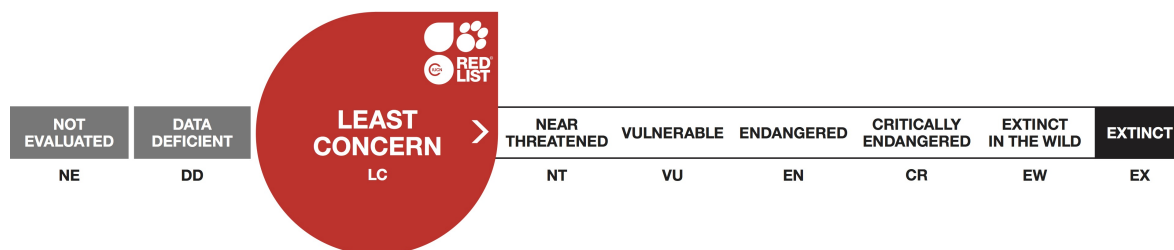


Balaenoptera acutorostrata, Common Minke Whale

Assessment by: Cooke, J.G.



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Taxonomy

| Kingdom | Phylum | Class | Order | Family |
|----------|----------|----------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Animalia | Chordata | Mammalia | Cetartiodactyla | Balaenopteridae |

Taxon Name: *Balaenoptera acutorostrata* Lacépède, 1804

Regional Assessments:

- Europe

Common Name(s):

- English: Common Minke Whale, Dwarf Minke Whale
- French: Petit rorqual
- Spanish: Ballena de Minke Común

Taxonomic Source(s):

Committee on Taxonomy. 2017. List of marine mammal species and subspecies. Available at: www.marinemammalscience.org. (Accessed: 31 August 2018).

Taxonomic Notes:

Until the 1990s, only one species of Minke Whale was recognized, the Antarctic Minke Whale, *Balaenoptera bonaerensis*, being regarded as conspecific with the Common Minke Whale, *B. acutorostrata*. Most of the scientific literature prior to the late 1990s uses the name *B. acutorostrata* for all Minke Whales including Antarctic Minke Whales. Since 2000, the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Scientific Committee has recognized Antarctic Minke Whales as the separate species *B. bonaerensis*, and provisionally assigns all Northern Hemisphere Minke Whales and all Southern Hemisphere "Dwarf" Minke Whales to *B. acutorostrata* (IWC 2001). This practice has been followed by management and treaty bodies, such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES).

The Dwarf Minke Whale is the common name used for *B. acutorostrata* in the Southern Hemisphere. It was initially described by Best (1985) and Arnold *et al.* (1987) in terms of its differences from the Antarctic Minke Whale. Subsequent genetic analyses (Wada *et al.* 1991, Pastene *et al.* 1994) revealed that the Dwarf Minke Whale is conspecific with the "ordinary" Minke Whale of the Northern Hemisphere, which was given the name Common Minke Whale, while the Antarctic Minke Whale is the separate species *B. bonaerensis* (see separate Red List assessment).

Following Rice (1998) the Committee on Taxonomy of the Society for Marine Mammalogy provisionally recognizes three subspecies: *B. a. acutorostrata* (Lacépède, 1804) in the North Atlantic, *B. a. scammoni* (Deméré, 1986) (= *B. a. davidsoni*) in the North Pacific, and the Dwarf Minke Whale as an unnamed subspecies in the Southern Hemisphere (Committee on Taxonomy 2017). However, the limited sampling of Dwarf Minke Whales to date does not support the grouping together of all Southern Hemisphere Dwarf Minke Whales. For example, Pastene *et al.* (2010) found Dwarf Minke Whales from Brazil and Chile to be more closely related to Common Minke Whales in the North Atlantic than to Dwarf Minke Whales in the South Pacific.

Assessment Information

Red List Category & Criteria: Least Concern [ver 3.1](#)

Year Published: 2018

Date Assessed: March 16, 2018

Justification:

There is no estimate of global population size of Common Minke Whales, but estimates covering most of the summer range in the North Atlantic and the North Pacific total around 200,000 individuals. While declines occurred in some regions in the past due to overexploitation, it can be assumed that the population has not been reduced by more than 50% relative to three generations ago (Red List criterion A1 for Vulnerable), given that the estimated catches, including net catches, taken during 1951-2017 (three generations of 22 years) sum to less than 180,000. The models used by the International Whaling Commission (IWC) Scientific Committee to assess the populations predict that the population has been recovering in the North Atlantic and is still declining in the western North Pacific, but work is underway to compare these predictions with recent empirical data. The Common Minke Whale is listed as Least Concern.

Previously Published Red List Assessments

2008 – Least Concern (LC)

<http://dx.doi.org/10.2305/IUCN.UK.2008.RLTS.T2474A9444043.en>

1996 – Lower Risk/near threatened (LR/nt)

1994 – Insufficiently Known (K)

Geographic Range

Range Description:

The Common Minke Whale is a cosmopolitan species found in all oceans and in nearly all latitudes, from nearly 70°S to 80°N. It occurs in the North Atlantic, the North Pacific, throughout the Southern Hemisphere and possibly also in the northern Indian Ocean. At least parts of the populations migrate to lower latitudes in winter, but there are no known areas of regular winter aggregation, except at the northern Great Barrier Reef, Australia, where Dwarf Minke Whales congregate in winter (Arnold 1997) and support a local swim-with tourism industry (Curnock *et al.* 2013). It is likely that the winter distribution of most Common Minke Whales is highly dispersed. The species can be hard to spot at sea except in fairly calm conditions but it is possible to detect its presence acoustically thanks to the confirmed identification of certain underwater sounds made by this species (Martin *et al.* 2013).

North Atlantic (*B. a. acutorostrata*)

In summer, Minke Whales are common throughout the northern North Atlantic as far north as Baffin Bay, Greenland Sea, Svalbard (Norway), Franz Josef Land, and Novaya Zemlya, and as far south as 40°N on the U.S. east coast (Hayes *et al.* 2017), and as far south as the western English Channel and the

central North Sea in Europe (Hammond *et al.* 2017). In the mid-Atlantic, summer concentrations of Minke Whales occur to at least as far south as 50°N (Sigurjónsson *et al.* 1991). It is possible that at least a part of the Minke Whale population over-winters in the summer range, but there has been little observation effort in winter to confirm this.

Minke Whales also occur south of the above described range in the southeastern North Atlantic, but with no obvious seasonality and not commonly seen, with the exception of the Canary Islands where they occur year-round (Van Waerebeek *et al.* 1999). There have been occasional sightings and strandings off Spain and Portugal, Western Sahara, Mauritania, Senegal, and the Cape Verde Islands (Aguilar *et al.* 1983, Van Waerebeek *et al.* 1999, Hazevoet *et al.* 2010, Hammond *et al.* 2017). Minke Whales occur regularly in the Azores, apparently year-round but in low numbers (Visser *et al.* 2011, Silva *et al.* 2014) and are occasionally seen off Maderia (Freitas *et al.* 2012). The Minke Whale is considered a “visitor species” in the Mediterranean (average <1 record per year) with one vagrant recorded in the Black Sea (Reeves and Notabartolo di Sciara 2006).

There are few winter sightings, but a summary by Mitchell (1991) indicates that Minke Whales do occur in winter near Bermuda, the Bahamas and the Antilles, and along the U.S. coast south of 40°N. A Norwegian winter expedition sent to the tropical Atlantic in 1989/90 to “find the breeding grounds of the Minke Whale” encountered just two at 20°N and 10°N off West Africa in December (Folkow and Blix 1991). Ten strandings have been recorded in the Gulf of Mexico (Jefferson and Schiro 1997) but very few live sightings. Minke Whales were detected off Puerto Rico in an acoustic survey in 1994 (Mellinger *et al.* 2000). A whale was satellite-tagged off western Iceland in August 2004 and tracked past the Azores to about 25°N by December before contact was lost (Víkingsson and Jørgensen 2015).

Acoustic monitoring from sites spaced along the mid-Atlantic ridge and the U.S. eastern seaboard, and in the eastern Caribbean showed the presence of Minke Whales in winter (November to March) at sites south of about 35°N, and only in other seasons at sites further north; these data suggest seasonal migration, but with different corridors for the spring and autumn migrations (Risch *et al.* 2014).

North Pacific (*B. a. scammoni*)

Minke Whales occur in summer all across the North Pacific north of about 30°N in summer, with a tendency for the distribution to shift northward in mid-summer. They are particularly abundant in the Okhotsk Sea in August (Miyashita *et al.* 1996a), and also occur in the Bering Sea, around the Aleutian Islands and in the Gulf of Alaska (Moore *et al.* 2002, Zerbini *et al.* 2006) and the Chukchi Sea (Ivashin and Votrogov 1981).

In the western North Pacific, there are at least two distinct subpopulations, and possibly more. The so-called “J stock” is an autumn-breeding population that occurs in the Yellow Sea, East China Sea, Sea of Japan, and along the Pacific coast of Japan within 20nm of the coast, with some penetration into the Okhotsk Sea. The “O stock,” which like most baleen whales breeds in winter, occurs in summer in the northwestern Pacific, including off the northeastern coasts of Japan and in the Okhotsk Sea (Omura and Sakiura 1956, Kato 1992, Kanda *et al.* 2009). Minke Whales in the Yellow Sea may be distinct from the remainder of J stock (Wade *et al.* 2010, IWC 2014).

The winter distribution in the western North Pacific is poorly known. Japanese expeditions to look for wintering grounds in the southwestern North Pacific during 1993-95 failed to locate any Minke Whales

(Miyashita *et al.* 1996b). The timing of the arrival of Minke Whales in Korean and western Japanese waters is suggestive of migration from the south in spring and return in autumn (Ohsumi 1983). Minke Whales were detected acoustically at low densities around the Mariana Islands in winter and spring 2007 (Norris *et al.* 2017).

In the eastern North Pacific, there appears to be a year-round subpopulation off California and Baja California and in the Gulf of California, and Minke Whales occur in summer off Oregon, Washington, and British Columbia (Carretta *et al.* 2017). Minke Whales have for many years been detected both acoustically and visually around the Hawaiian Islands in winter but not in substantial numbers (Carretta *et al.* 2017). The wintering area in the eastern North Pacific (U.S. mainland to Hawaii) has been identified acoustically to be primarily between 15° and 35° N latitude, with a boundary at around 135°W between two populations with acoustically distinct signatures (Rankin and Barlow 2005).

Northern Indian Ocean

There have been very few records of Minke Whales in the northern Indian Ocean and none of them have been confirmed (Brownell *et al.* 2017). Deriyana (1963) described a new subspecies of Minke Whale, *B. acutorostrata thalmaha*, from strandings in Sri Lanka but subsequent examination of the type specimen indicated that it was probably from a Bryde's whale, *B. edeni* (Brownell *et al.* 2017).

Southern Hemisphere (Dwarf Minke Whales)

Much of the data on the occurrence of Minke Whales in the Southern Hemisphere is ambiguous with respect to identification as *B. acutorostrata* or *B. bonaerensis*, because the two species are partially sympatric. Japanese scouting vessel data indicated high abundance of Minke Whales in November between 10°-30°S in the central South Pacific and in much of the eastern and southern Indian Ocean to 50°S (Miyashita *et al.* 1996a), but the species identity is unclear. The limited information available from surveys in low and middle latitudes from the 1987/88 season onwards, when the two species were reliably distinguished, indicates that most of the Minke Whales were *B. bonaerensis* (Nishiwaki *et al.* 1991), probably on route to the Antarctic from (as yet unknown) low-latitude breeding grounds, but that *B. acutorostrata* is also present in these latitudes.

Dwarf Minke Whales (*B. acutorostrata*) also occur at higher latitudes in the Southern Hemisphere but are much less common than *B. bonaerensis*. A winter survey in the Bellinghousen Sea in August 1993 found two Dwarf Minke Whales, including one at 69°25'S which is the southernmost record for this species (Acevedo *et al.* 2011). In coastal waters, Dwarf Minke Whales have been recorded off most of the South Atlantic coast of South America (Zerbini *et al.* 1996, Secchi *et al.* 2003), in the Beagle Channel (Chile/Argentina) (Acevedo *et al.* 2006), and off South Africa (Best 1985), Australia (Arnold *et al.* 1987, Arnold 1997), New Zealand (Dawson and Sooten 1990), and New Caledonia (Garrigue and Greaves 2001). The most northerly confirmed Southern Hemisphere record is from 2°S, off the northern coast of Brazil (Magalhães *et al.* 2007). Three Dwarf Minke Whales were caught in whaling operations off Costinha, Brazil in 1980 along with 900 Antarctic Minke Whales (da Rocha and Braga 1982).

Country Occurrence:

Native: Anguilla; Antarctica; Antigua and Barbuda; Argentina; Australia; Bahamas; Belgium; Bermuda; Brazil; Cabo Verde; Canada; Chile; China; Cuba; Denmark; Dominica; Dominican Republic; Faroe Islands; France; French Guiana; Gambia; Greece; Greenland; Guadeloupe; Iceland; Indonesia; Ireland; Italy; Japan; Korea, Democratic People's Republic of; Korea, Republic of; Mauritania; Mexico; Morocco; Mozambique; Netherlands; New Caledonia; New Zealand; Norway; Papua New Guinea; Portugal

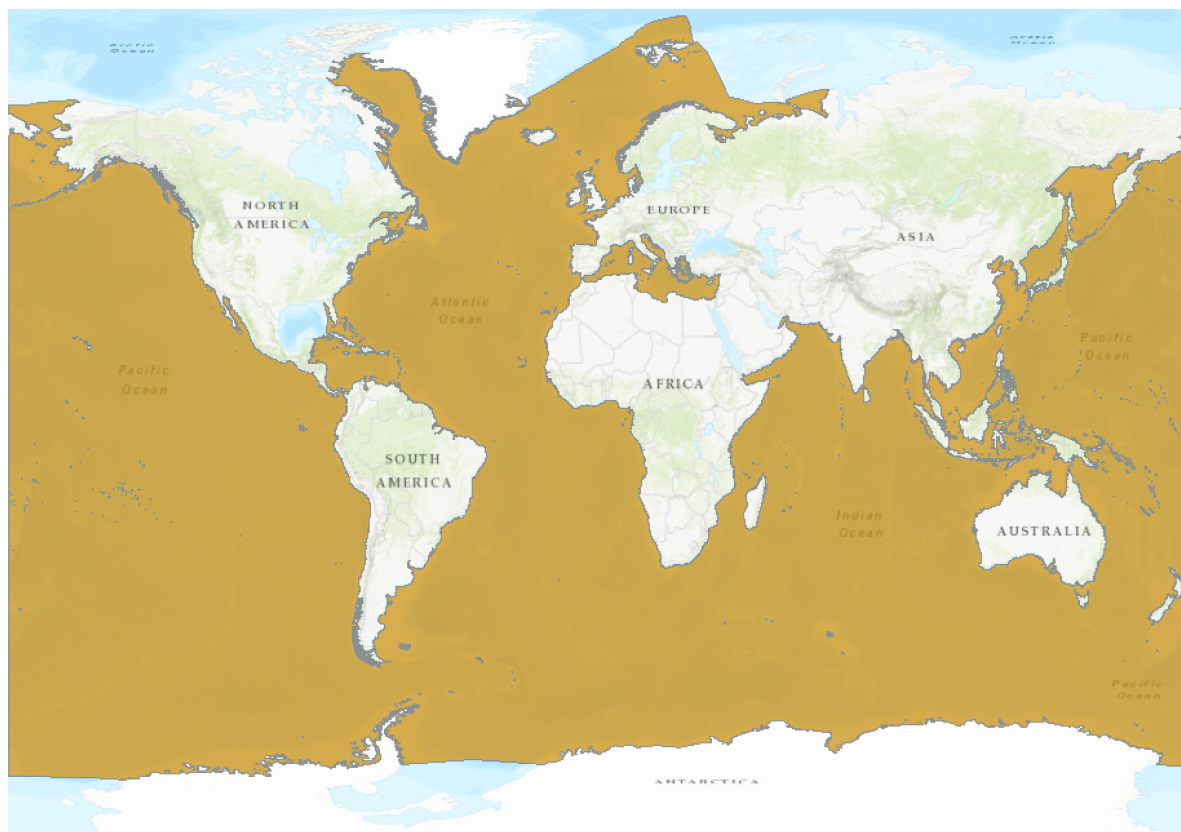
(Azores, Madeira, Portugal (mainland)); Puerto Rico; Russian Federation; Saint Martin (French part); Saint Pierre and Miquelon; Senegal; Sint Maarten (Dutch part); South Africa; Spain (Canary Is.); Svalbard and Jan Mayen; Taiwan, Province of China; Turks and Caicos Islands; United Kingdom; United States; Uruguay; Virgin Islands, British; Virgin Islands, U.S.; Western Sahara

FAO Marine Fishing Areas:

Native: Arctic Sea - , Atlantic - northwest, Atlantic - southeast, Atlantic - northeast, Atlantic - southwest, Atlantic - eastern central, Atlantic - western central, Indian Ocean - Antarctic, Indian Ocean - eastern, Indian Ocean - western, Pacific - northwest, Pacific - eastern central, Pacific - southwest, Pacific - Antarctic, Pacific - northeast, Pacific - southeast, Pacific - western central

Distribution Map

Balaenoptera acutorostrata



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Kilometer

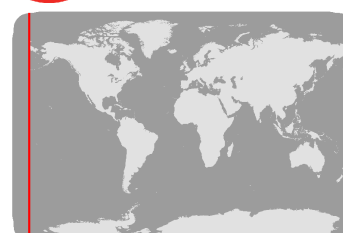
Sources: Esri, HERE, Garmin, Intermap, increment P Corp., GEBCO, USGS, FAO, NPS, NRCAN, GeoBase, IGN, Kadaster NL, Ordnance Survey, Esri Japan, METI, Esri China (Hong Kong), swisstopo, © OpenStreetMap contributors, and the GIS User Community

Range

■ Extant (resident)

Compiled by:

IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature)



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply any official endorsement, acceptance or opinion by IUCN.



Population

North Atlantic

The IWC traditionally recognizes four stocks of Minke Whales in the North Atlantic: Northeast Atlantic, Central North Atlantic, West Greenland, and Canadian East Coast (which includes the U.S. east coast) but the evidence for these is equivocal. Recent genetic analyses suggest that there may be just two main breeding populations, whose winter distributions are unknown and which mix on the summer feeding grounds (Anderwald *et al.* 2011).

The latest review of abundance, catches, and population structure was completed by the IWC Scientific Committee in 2017 (IWC 2018a). The Committee's review resulted in stock structure hypotheses involving 1, 2, or 3 breeding stocks being considered equally plausible.

Population estimates for this species by area have been variable over time (IWC 2017), probably mainly due to changes in distribution, but possibly also affected by methodological issues. The most recent estimates from surveys conducted during 2007-2015 in the main summer range are:

- US waters (Virginia to lower Bay of Fundy): 2,591 (coefficient of variation (CV) 0.81) in 2011 (Palka 2012);
- Canadian Atlantic waters and Gulf of St Lawrence: 20,741 (CV 0.30) in 2007 (Lawson and Gosselin, 2011);
- West Greenland: 5,095 (CV 0.46), East Greenland: 2,762 (CV 0.47) (Hansen *et al.* 2018);
- central North Atlantic pelagic: 6,306 (CV 0.35), Iceland coastal: 12,710 (CV 0.53) in 2015 (IWC 2018a);
- Jan Mayen: 10,991 (CV 0.36) in 2010;
- West Svalbard: 5,009 (CV 0.29) in 2008;
- East Svalbard: 22,281 (CV 0.18) in 2008;
- Barents Sea: 34,125 (CV 0.34) in 2013;
- Norwegian Sea and Faeroes: 21,218 (CV 0.32) in 2011;
- British Isles and North Sea: 12,808 (CV 0.35) in 2016 (excluding most of Irish waters) (Hammond *et al.* 2017).

These total about 156,000 with a nominal CV of 0.12.

Pre-modern catches of Minke Whales in the North Atlantic are known to have occurred but were probably small (Holt 1988). Recorded catches from modern whaling begin around 1930 and total just under 150,000 whales (Allison 2017). The most intense whaling on this species took place in the northeast Atlantic during 1941-83, when over 100,000 whales were taken. Simulations of the population indicate that it was reduced by about half during this period (IWC 2018a). The decline in the population

was noticed at the time from the decline in catches per whaling vessel per day (IWC 1984). Commercial catches were phased out during 1984-87, but were resumed in 1993 at a reduced level and continue to this day. Catches by indigenous hunters continue in West Greenland waters, and in small numbers off East Greenland. The average annual catch of Minke Whales in the North Atlantic during 2013-17 was about 800, taken mainly in Norwegian waters (IWC 2018b). The population is predicted to have partially recovered from the past period of high catches (IWC 2018a) but abundance estimates have been too variable to corroborate this.

Western North Pacific

The IWC recognizes three management areas in the North Pacific: Sea of Japan – Yellow Sea – East China Sea; Okhotsk Sea – West Pacific (west of 180°); and “Remainder” (east of 180°). However recent work has focused on delineating the range of the ‘J stock’, which is now known to include the near-shore waters of the Pacific coast of Japan, mainly within 20 km of shore, where animals from this stock are partially sympatric with other Minke Whales, and are subject to direct and incidental takes (see Geographic Range).

The latest review of abundance, catches, and population structure of Minke Whales in the western North Pacific was completed by the IWC Scientific Committee in 2013 and resulted in a number of alternative hypotheses for the population structure in this region being treated as plausible, without consensus on all of them (IWC 2014). The most recent abundance estimates accepted by the IWC Scientific Committee for the western North Pacific (west of 170°E) derive from data collected during 2005-12 and total 27,000 animals (CV 0.16), of which about 60% were in the Okhotsk Sea (Allison *et al.* 2014).

Minke Whales have been caught in nets on the Japanese coast at least since the 17th century (Kasuya 2009), and net catches have continued in modern times alongside direct hunting (Kim 1999, Toboyama *et al.* 1992). Estimated catches in the western North Pacific since 1946 total about 60,000 Minke Whales, of which 38,000 were taken by whaling operations and 22,000 in nets (Allison 2014, IWC 2018b). These were taken primarily off Japan and Korea, plus a limited number of catches off China and some offshore catches. Catches in recent years have declined to about 250 per year, taken mainly in nets (Japan 2014-17, Korea 2013-17). The Korean fisheries catching Minke Whales are described by Song *et al.* (2010); most of the catches were in set nets, gill nets or pots. The IWC Scientific Committee has in the past expressed concern about incomplete reporting of net catches, especially as genetic capture-recapture analyses of meat market products suggested that more individuals were entering the markets than were reported caught (Baker *et al.* 2007, IWC 2009), but has since agreed on revised estimates of the net catch (Allison 2014).

Most of the net catch has been from J stock, given that genetic sampling of markets has shown that nearly all the products sold in Korea and nearly half the products sold from Japan have been from that stock (Lukoschek *et al.* 2009). The IWC Scientific Committee has in the past expressed particular concern on the effects of catches on the J stock, which had already been depleted by past catches (IWC 2009). The latest assessment by the Committee predicts continuing decline in the J stock (and in the Yellow Sea stock, if it is separate from the J stock) under most of the scenarios examined (IWC 2014). However, the trend has not been corroborated by other evidence, and the Scientific Committee has called for the assessments to be updated to take account of auxiliary information (IWC 2018c).

Eastern North Pacific (east of 180°E)

Minke Whale densities in the eastern North Pacific are generally lower than in the western region: for example, 636 (CV 0.72) for the U.S. west coast during 2008-14 (Barlow 2016), 522 (CV 0.30) for the waters of British Columbia during 2004-08 (Best *et al.* 2015), 2,020 (CV 0.73) for the eastern Bering Sea shelf (Friday *et al.* 2013), and 1,232 (CV 0.34) for coastal waters of the northern Gulf of Alaska and the eastern and central Aleutian Islands (Zerbini *et al.* 2006). Only 12 Minke Whales were seen in the international POWER surveys of the North Pacific and Gulf of Alaska north of 40°N east of 170°E during 2010-12, and none were seen south of 40°N during 2013-16 (IWC 2018d). However, because Minke Whales were not a target species and surveys continued in sea states considerably above those suitable for observing this species, no abundance estimate has been calculated (IWC 2016).

Southern Hemisphere

It is not possible at this time to estimate the abundance of *B. acutorostrata* in the Southern Hemisphere, because most of the available quantitative sighting data do not distinguish it from the more numerous *B. bonaerensis* with which it is partially sympatric. *B. acutorostrata* has not been subject to significant exploitation in the Southern Hemisphere. Of more than 1,700 Minke Whales taken by Antarctic pelagic whaling from the 1987/88 to the 1992/93 season (when the two species have been reliably distinguished), only 16 were Dwarf Minke Whales (Nishiwaki *et al.* 2005). One was taken at 65°S and the remainder between 55° and 62°S, 55°S being the northern limit of whaling operations. Surveys of the Antarctic Peninsula in summer during 1994-2008 found only 11 Dwarf Minke Whales versus 519 Antarctic Minke Whales (Acevedo *et al.* 2011). In the IDCR/SOWER series of international cetacean surveys south of 60°S, only 0.2% of Minke Whale sightings were *B. acutorostrata* (Branch and Butterworth 2001).

Current Population Trend: Unknown

Habitat and Ecology (see Appendix for additional information)

The Common Minke Whale occurs in both coastal and offshore waters and exploits a variety of prey species in different areas according to availability.

In the North Atlantic, studies in Icelandic shelf waters showed a decrease during in 2003-07 in Sandeels (Ammodytidae), krill (Euphausiacea) and Capelin (*Mallotus villosus*) relative to previous years, and a corresponding increase in Herring (*Clupea harengus*) and Haddock (*Melanogrammus aeglefinus*). In Norwegian waters in 2000-2004, krill dominated the diet near Svalbard, while Capelin dominated the diet around Bear Island and contributed considerably to the diet along the coast of northern Norway, along with Herring and Haddock. The diet in the Norwegian Sea consisted of mainly of Herring, while the diet in the North Sea was dominated by Sandeels and Mackerel (*Scomber scombrus*) (Windsland *et al.* 2007). Minke Whales caught off Newfoundland during 1966-72 contained mainly Capelin (Mitchell 1974).

In the offshore northwestern Pacific, the diet during 1996-2014 consisted mainly of Japanese Anchovy (*Engraulis japonicus*), Pacific Saury (*Cololabis saira*), and Walleye Pollock (*Gadus chalcogrammus*). Krill (*Euphausia pacifica*) and squid (Tamura *et al.* 2016a). In some of the Japanese coastal areas, Pacific Sandlance (*Ammodytes personatus*) is also important (Tamura *et al.* 2016b). In the Okhotsk Sea the diet was dominated by krill (Lindstrøm *et al.* 1998).

Feeding habits of the Dwarf Minke Whale are poorly known. The stomach contents of an individual bycaught in Brazil contained exclusively krill (*Euphausia similis*) (Secchi *et al.* 2003).

All Minke Whales are subject to predation by Killer Whales (*Orcinus orca*), and tend to flee at high speed to evade them (Ford *et al.* 2005). The Minke Whales' apparently dispersed distribution outside the summer feeding season may be an adaptation to Killer Whale predation pressure (Ford and Reeves 2008).

With the exception of the Sea of Japan – Yellow Sea – East China Sea population, conception and birth in Common Minke Whales is believed to occur in winter. Most animals occur singly, and few in groups of more than two. The reproductive cycle of the Sea of Japan – Yellow Sea – East China Sea stock (the J stock) appears to be four months out of phase with other North Pacific Minke Whales, with conceptions occurring in October-November instead of February-March for the Okhotsk Sea – West Pacific population (Omura and Sakiura 1956, Kato 1992). This is the only known case of breeding asynchrony in baleen whale populations from the same hemisphere.

Methods of age determination have been developed only recently for this species (Maeda *et al.* 2018) and a direct estimate of generation time is not yet available. The limited number of individual age estimates obtained to date (Maeda *et al.* 2017) is consistent with a female age at first reproduction of 8 years as estimated from inter-specific comparisons by Taylor *et al.* (2007). Hence, the Taylor *et al.* generation time estimate of 22 years is plausible.

Systems: Marine

Use and Trade

Common Minke Whales were heavily hunted in the past, and hunting at a reduced level is ongoing in parts of the North Atlantic and North Pacific. The latest available Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) trade reports show 199 tonnes of Minke Whale products exported from Norway to Japan in 2016, and 110 tonnes exported from Iceland to Japan in 2013 (CITES 2017). There have been no reported directed takes on the high seas since 2014.

Threats (see Appendix for additional information)

Whaling on Common Minke Whales was intensive in the northeastern Atlantic especially during 1940-83, when it reduced the population by about half (IWC 2018a). Commercial catches were phased out during 1984-87, but resumed at a reduced level in Norwegian waters in 1992 and in Icelandic waters in 2002, initially under scientific permits (IWC 2018c). The IWC Scientific Committee has approved in principle catch levels for North Atlantic Minke Whales according to its Revised Management Procedure, but catch limits are set at national level using a modified version of the procedure that allows higher limits (IWC 2018a). However, the catches actually taken have on average been below the limits set.

“Aboriginal subsistence whaling” has continued uninterrupted in Greenlandic waters since the 1960s. The IWC Scientific Committee regularly reviews the situation and has advised that the currently allowed levels of take of Common Minke Whales will not harm the population (IWC 2018c).

Catches by whaling vessels in the North Pacific peaked in the mid-1970s when the annual catch exceeded 1,500, and were phased out over 1983-87 with the coming into effect of the International Convention for Regulation of Whaling's moratorium on commercial whaling, but resumed in 1994 under a scientific permit issued by the Government of Japan. Since 2014, active whaling on Common Minke Whales has been limited to coastal operations off the Pacific coast of Japan (IWC 2018b). Net catches, including incidental catches in fisheries, do not count as “whaling” and are not regulated by the IWC, but are taken into account in the IWC Scientific Committee's assessments of population status and sustainable take levels. Net catches increased during the 1980s and have continued off Japan and Korea, and possibly also off China. The IWC Scientific Committee has expressed concern over the sustainability of takes from the autumn-breeding Sea of Japan–Yellow Sea–East China Sea population (IWC 2009), and most of its population projections predict a continuing decline of this population (IWC 2014). However, the Committee in 2017 recommended that the projection model be revised to ensure consistency with available information on recent trends in abundance (IWC 2018c).

Outside of the western North Pacific region, reported entanglements of Minke Whales in fishing gear are few in relation to the apparent overall abundance of the species (e.g., 6.5/year on the eastern U.S. seaboard, Hayes *et al.* 2017). Reports of ship strikes on this species are also few (e.g., 1.6/year on the eastern U.S. seaboard, Hayes *et al.* 2017). Although most ship strikes probably go undetected or unreported, the data suggest that this species may be less vulnerable to shipping than are the larger whale species.

Conservation Actions (see Appendix for additional information)

Catch limits for all commercial whaling of Common Minke Whales have been set at zero by the IWC since 1986. This moratorium applies to all states that are members of the IWC, except those that hold objections or reservations (Iceland, Norway, and the Russian Federation). The moratorium does not cover net catches (which occur mainly in Japan and Korea), catches taken under Special Permits for scientific research (which, for this species, have since 2014 only been issued for takes off the Pacific coast of Japan), or catches for “aboriginal subsistence whaling” under IWC management (which, for this species, is currently practiced regularly only off Greenland). *Balaenoptera acutorostrata* is included in Appendix I of CITES, with the exception of the West Greenland population which is included in Appendix II. The Appendix I listing implies prohibition of commercial international trade in products, but such prohibition does not apply to Iceland, Norway, or Japan, who hold reservations on the species (see Use and Trade). The species is covered by generic regulations for the protection of cetaceans or marine mammals in several range states.

Credits

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Reviewer(s): Hammond, P.S., Reeves, R., Taylor, B.L., Donovan, G. & Brownell Jr., R.L.

Contributor(s): Ashe, E.

Facilitators(s) and Lowry, L.
Compiler(s):

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External Resources

For [Images and External Links to Additional Information](#), please see the [Red List website](#).

Appendix

Habitats

(<http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes>)

| Habitat | Season | Suitability | Major Importance? |
|--|--------|-------------|-------------------|
| 9. Marine Neritic -> 9.1. Marine Neritic - Pelagic | - | Suitable | Yes |
| 10. Marine Oceanic -> 10.1. Marine Oceanic - Epipelagic (0-200m) | - | Suitable | Yes |

Threats

(<http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes>)

| Threat | Timing | Scope | Severity | Impact Score |
|--|--------------------------|---|----------------|--------------|
| 5. Biological resource use -> 5.4. Fishing & harvesting aquatic resources -> 5.4.1. Intentional use: (subsistence/small scale) [harvest] | Ongoing | Minority (50%) | Unknown | Unknown |
| | Stresses: | 2. Species Stresses -> 2.1. Species mortality | | |
| 5. Biological resource use -> 5.4. Fishing & harvesting aquatic resources -> 5.4.2. Intentional use: (large scale) [harvest] | Past, unlikely to return | Majority (50-90%) | Rapid declines | Past impact |
| 5. Biological resource use -> 5.4. Fishing & harvesting aquatic resources -> 5.4.3. Unintentional effects: (subsistence/small scale) [harvest] | Ongoing | Minority (50%) | Unknown | Unknown |
| | Stresses: | 2. Species Stresses -> 2.1. Species mortality | | |

Conservation Actions in Place

(<http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes>)

| Conservation Actions in Place |
|---|
| In-Place Research, Monitoring and Planning |
| Action Recovery plan: No |
| Systematic monitoring scheme: No |
| In-Place Species Management |
| Harvest management plan: Yes |
| In-Place Education |
| Included in international legislation: Yes |
| Subject to any international management/trade controls: Yes |

Conservation Actions Needed

(<http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes>)

| |
|---|
| Conservation Actions Needed |
| 3. Species management -> 3.1. Species management -> 3.1.1. Harvest management |

Research Needed

(<http://www.iucnredlist.org/technical-documents/classification-schemes>)

| |
|--|
| Research Needed |
| 1. Research -> 1.2. Population size, distribution & trends |
| 1. Research -> 1.5. Threats |
| 3. Monitoring -> 3.1. Population trends |

Additional Data Fields

| |
|---|
| Distribution |
| Continuing decline in area of occupancy (AOO): No |
| Extreme fluctuations in area of occupancy (AOO): No |
| Continuing decline in extent of occurrence (EOO): No |
| Extreme fluctuations in extent of occurrence (EOO): No |
| Population |
| Number of mature individuals: 200000 |
| Continuing decline of mature individuals: Unknown |
| Extreme fluctuations: No |
| Population severely fragmented: No |
| Habitats and Ecology |
| Continuing decline in area, extent and/or quality of habitat: Unknown |

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