



DESCRIPTION AND HABITAT

The Minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*) is Britain’s most common baleen whale species and is particularly abundant on the west coast of Scotland. The Argyll region is believed to hold a large proportion of th UK population. Minke whale are present from April - November in north Argyll waters, particularly north of Coll and south of Iona. From April - July it is more common off the north of Coll, while during August - November the distribution shifts north to the Small Isles. In winter, Minke is believed to migrate to unknown breeding grounds.

To date the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust has identified 67 individual whales in the area and these are known to return to the same area year after year.

UK BIODIVERSITY STATUS

The minke whale is on the UK’s long list of globally threatened/declining species.

LEGAL STATUS

- Habitats Directive: Annex IV.
- IUCN Status: Near Threatened.
- Bern Convention: Annex III.
- Bonn Convention: Appendix II.
- CITES: Appendix I.
- Wildlife & Countryside Act: Schedule V.

FACTORS AFFECTING THE SPECIES IN ARGYLL & BUTE

Threats:- Environmental contaminants such as sewage, oil, fish farm pollutants, litter and marine debris, persistent organic pollutants, anthropogenic noise.
 Military activities such a naval sonar.
 Commercial whaling as Norway hunts the Minke whale in the North Atlantic and may capture animals that inhabit Argyll waters for part of the year.

Impacts:- Loss of species.

OBJECTIVES		TARGETS
I	Safeguard the Minke feeding and breeding grounds via statutory protection measures.	Protect Minke whale populations.

CURRENT MANAGEMENT

- Collection and collation of sightings in Argyll waters by the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust and Seawatch Foundation.
- Collation of a catalogue of individual minke whales that is being used to estimate minimum population size for the area and patterns of habitat use.
- A study into the seasonal changes in feeding behaviour.
- A code of conduct for wildlife tour operators and members of the public observing cetaceans.
- An educational programme to increase public awareness and knowledge of Minke whales and other cetaceans.
- Post-mortem and tissue studies of stranded cetaceans to establish cause of death.

ACTION FOR BIODIVERSITY

1	Promote awareness about Minke whales via leaflets, media coverage and eco-tourism.
2	Identify further Minke whale breeding and feeding sites.
3	Conduct research into the behaviour, biology and ecology of Minke Whales in Argyll.
4	Use genetic fingerprinting to investigate population dynamics and to determine if Minke Whale meat on sale in Norway and the Orient is from Scottish Minke Whales.
5	Investigate disturbance from noise or seismic testing.

Partners involved include HW&DT, SMRU, IWC, CITES, and ICES.