

## **Marine Animals in the Area 2: Ginkgo-toothed Beaked Whale (*Mesoplodon ginkgodens*)**

This beaked whale species, named for the two ginkgo-leaf-shaped teeth that protrude from the lower jaw of the male, is scarce, though it inhabits a wide range of seas from the tropics through to temperate regions, including the Pacific and Indian Oceans. A large percentage of reported sightings are from the seas around Japan, but even here records only show 23 specimens washed up on shore between 1935 and 2016. In 2012, a 4.7-meter-long male washed up on Naruto's Chidorigahama Beach; its skeleton is now on display in the Tokushima Prefectural Museum.

Both males and females grow to approximately 5 meters, weighing around 1.5 to 2 tons, and have a blackish-blue body. Because of their rarity, little is known about their ecology and way of life. One clue, however, are the bite wounds, believed to be from parasites and small deep-sea sharks, that are often found on the bodies of those that have washed up on the beach. The species is growing ever scarcer, and is included on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.