

Minke Whales

The minke whale (*Balaenoptera acutorostrata*), like the blue whale, is a species of baleen whale. It generally feeds on krill, small squid, and fish. It filters its food through bristle-like baleen plates, made of keratin. The Japanese name for the minke whale is *higekujira*, which means bearded whale.

From land to sea

Minke whales are cetaceans (a group which includes whales, dolphins, and porpoises), marine mammals that transitioned from land to sea many millions of years ago. The minke whale is a living example of that evolution. The small bones that remain near the whale's spine in the rear of its body are all that remains of its legs after millions of years of evolution.

Minke whales migrate to the seas around Kushiro every autumn. Since commercial whaling recommenced in 2019, a small number are harvested off the coast of Kushiro under strict catch quotas.