

Mesoplodon hectori (Gray, 1871)

English: Hector's beaked whale

German: Hector Schnabelwal

Spanish: Zifio de Héctor, ballena picuda de Héctor

French: Mésoplodon de Hector, baleine à bec de Hector

Family Ziphiidae

1. Description

Hector's beaked whale appears to be dark grey to brown, with pale grey undersides. Single as well as closely paired scratches and round scars (presumably from cookie-cutter sharks) are common on the flanks. Adult males have a white beak and white forehead, with a small triangular tooth on either side of the lower jaw near the tip. The longest specimens measured 4.3 m (Jefferson et al. 2008).

2. Distribution

<http://www.iucnredlist.org/apps/redlist/details/41759/0/rangemap>

Distribution of Mesoplodon hectori (Taylor et al. 2008; © IUCN). The species distribution is circumpolar in cool-temperate waters of the southern hemisphere (Pitman, 2002; Jefferson et al. 2008).

Hector's beaked whale appears to be circumglobal in cold temperate waters of the Southern Hemisphere. Specimens were recorded from Tierra del Fuego and Chubut in Argentina, the Falkland Islands/Islas Malvinas, Rio Grande do Sul in Brazil, Cape Province in South Africa, Tasmania, North Island and South Island in New Zealand, and Isla Navarino in Chile (reviewed by Rice, 1998).

Previously, it was supposed that this species may also be vagrant in southern California, where several strandings and sightings were reported from 1975 to 1979 (Rice, 1998). However, the California specimens have subsequently been assigned to the new species *M. perrini*, found in the eastern North Pacific (Dalebout et al. 2000, 2002), which confines *M. hectori* to the Southern Hemisphere.

3. Population size

Unknown

4. Biology and Behaviour

According to Carwardine (1995), with only 2 probable sightings in the wild, there is little information on behaviour. However, this species may be unusual for a *Mesoplodon* because, in both instances, one of the animals seemed inquisitive and actually approached the boat. If this is normal behaviour, it seems strange that there have not been more sightings (unless the species is rare).

Pairs may be the typical group size. Hector's beaked whales are known to feed on squid (Jefferson et al. 1993).

5. Migration

Unknown

6. Threats

Unknown

7. Remarks

Range states: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Chile, Falkland Islands (Malvinas), New Zealand , South Africa, United States of America, Uruguay (Taylor et al. 2008).

Categorised as "Data Deficient" by IUCN. Hector's beaked whale is not listed by CMS. The species is listed in Appendix II of CITES. See recommendations for southern South American cetaceans in Hucke-Gaete (2000) in Appendix 1.

8. Sources and further information

see "Genus *Mesoplodon* – Beaked Whales: Introduction and Sources"

© Boris Culik (2010) Odontocetes. The toothed whales: "*Mesoplodon hectori*". UNEP/CMS Secretariat, Bonn, Germany. http://www.cms.int/reports/small_cetaceans/index.htm

© Illustrations by Maurizio Würtz, Artescienza.

© Maps by IUCN.