



Cuvier's beaked whale, Azores, North Atlantic Ocean  
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There are at least 20 species of beaked whales but they are rarely spotted because they inhabit very deep offshore waters where humans rarely go. We know that they are very deep divers and so are out of sight for long periods. Cuvier's beaked whales are no different, inhabiting deep temperate and tropical waters around the world.

Cuvier's beaked whales are also called goose-beaked whales because they have no clear forehead above their short beak - similar to a goose. They have cigar-shaped bodies with small dorsal fins set back towards their tail. Like other beaked whales, their small narrow flippers fit into 'flipper pockets' (small dents) so they can tuck them away to glide better. They are dark grey to reddish brown and the adult males have a white head. Both males and females have a dark area around the eyes.

## SCIENTIFIC NAME

*Ziphius cavirostris*

Class	▶ Mammalia
Order	▶ Cetacea
Suborder	▶ Odontoceti
Family	▶ Ziphiidae
Genus	▶ <i>Ziphius</i>
Species	▶ <i>cavirostris</i>

## DID YOU KNOW ?

Cuvier's beaked whales have been found to strand in large numbers and there are more strandings of Cuvier's than any other species of beaked whale. (When a whale comes into shallow water or onto shore sick, injured, or dead, it is called a "stranding.") These strandings have been linked to naval exercises (sonar) where very loud noise has been transmitted under water.

## Cuvier's beaked whale ▶ *Ziphius cavirostris*



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The scientific species name *cavirostris* comes from the Latin word *cavo* meaning hollow or concave. This refers to the depression on the forehead of the male.

- ▶ Beaked whales get this name because all species have a beak (rostrum). Some beaks are long and pencil-like while others are quite short.
- ▶ Only a few beaked whales have been studied in detail and some species have never been seen alive!
- ▶ There could be species of beaked whales yet to be discovered! The latest species to be discovered was Perrin's beaked whale - discovered in 2002.
- ▶ Cuvier's beaked whales feed mostly on squid but also eat fish and other crustaceans. Their prey is most likely to live in deep waters near the sea floor. Because they don't have teeth that work, we think that they catch their prey by suction!
- ▶ They often have oval scars on their bodies caused by cookie-cutter sharks or long linear scars caused by each other which can make them appear lighter in colour.

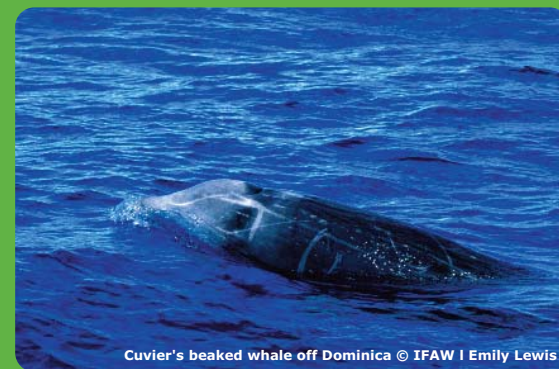


■ Cuvier's beaked whale distribution (approx.)

▶ Cuvier's beaked whales are found in many different areas of the world including the Pacific Ocean, Atlantic Ocean, Indian Ocean and the Caribbean and Mediterranean Seas. This wide a range is unusual - most beaked whale species are confined to one or two of the oceans. They seem to like deep water (over 1,000 metres!) where the land slopes steeply into the sea.

Mature males have two upward pointing teeth set on the tip of the lower jaw that can be seen even when it is closed. And often there are barnacles stuck to the teeth!

Researchers can tell beaked whale species apart by studying the size and shape of their teeth and the position of these teeth in the lower jaw... not an easy task while in a boat on a wavy ocean!



Cuvier's beaked whale off Dominica © IFAW | Emily Lewis

