

# Zombie worms found in Britain's North Sea

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So-called zombie worms that feed on bones of dead whales have reportedly been found in England's North Sea.

Scientists say the worms belong to a new class of marine organism that scavenges whale carcasses, The Independent reported Wednesday.

"We were astounded to discover a species completely new to science in an environment that is so well known," Adrian Glover, a marine biologist at the Natural History Museum in London, told the newspaper.

Glover and Thomas Dahlgren of Goteborg University in Sweden reported finding the new worm on the bones of a dead, stranded minke whale.

The scientists named the worm *Osedax mucofloris*, which means bone-eating snot flower.

"We sometimes called them snot worms because, when they retreat into their tubes, they leave mucus behind which is probably a defensive mechanism," Glover told the Independent.

Last year, U.S. scientists found similar organisms feeding on the bones of dead whales buried at depths of 8,000 feet. They nicknamed the species "zombie worms."

But the North Sea species is genetically distinct from the species discovered off the coast of California, said a study published in the journal *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*.

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