

LEARN SOMETHING NEW  
EACH WEEK ON OUR  
WORLD OF WONDER PAGES!



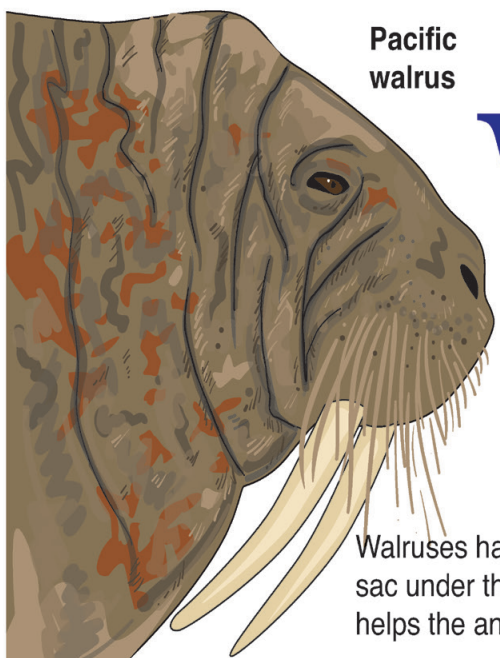
# WORLD OF WONDER

Exploring the realms of history, science, nature and technology

## WALRUSES

Its large size, long ivory tusks and distinctive whiskers make the walrus easily recognizable. This marine mammal can be found in the Arctic Ocean and adjacent seas.

Pacific walrus



Walrus have an air sac under the throat that helps the animal float.

Walrus skin is wrinkled and very thick.

They may look bald, but walrus skin is covered by a thin layer of small, coarse hairs.



Carved walrus tusk

### Northern people

Native peoples of the Arctic region still hunt walrus — as they have done for many hundreds of years. The walrus has played an important role in the cultures of many indigenous Arctic peoples. They have hunted the walrus for its meat, fat, skin, tusks and bone. They use the walrus for subsistence and other purposes.

The walrus also plays an important role in the religion and folklore of many Arctic peoples.

### Did you know?

Walrus are highly social and tend to gather in groups ranging from just a few to more than a thousand.

Walrus blubber can be up to 6 inches (15 cm) thick. It helps keep them warm and provides energy.

Walrus are typically a cinnamon brown color, but they can turn whitish after diving or even pink when they are warm or grow old.

Walrus are **terrestrial marine mammals**, meaning they can swim in the ocean and walk on land and sea ice.

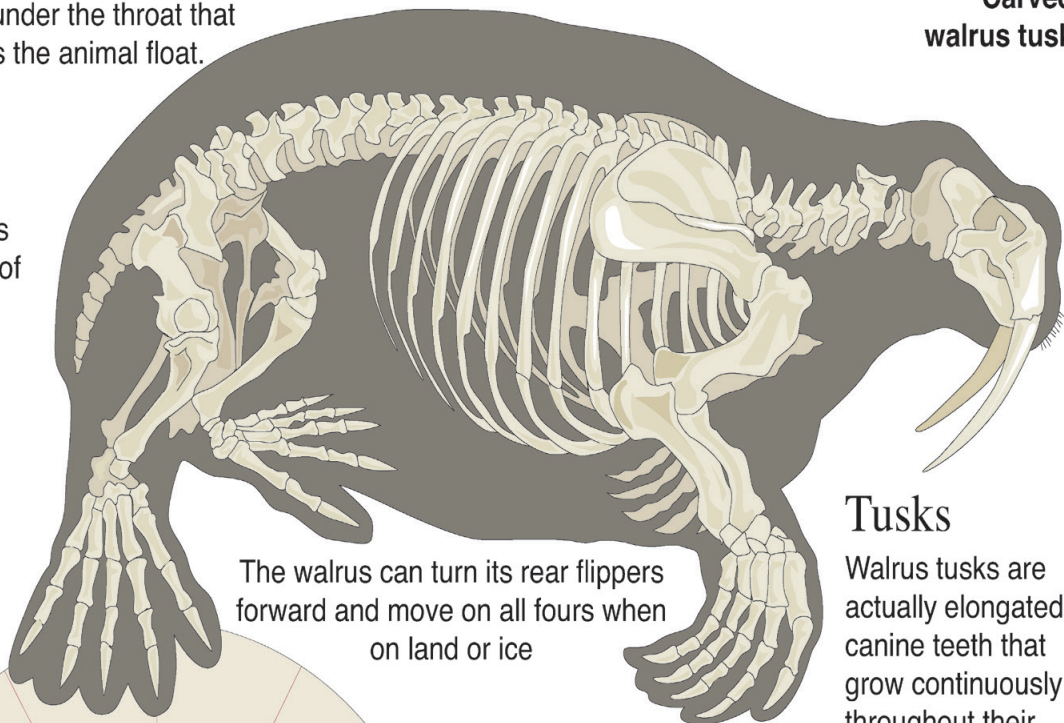
Walrus breed fairly infrequently, so females are very protective of their young. If threatened, a mother walrus will hold her calf with her flippers and dive into the water to escape predators.

Walrus live to about 20 to 30 years old in the wild and up to 40 years in captivity. Many adult walrus have scars from fighting with other walrus during the breeding season or from fighting off predators.

Walrus have few natural predators, but polar bears and killer whales have occasionally attacked them.

Walrus are easily spooked by disturbances or noises. Large stampedes can happen when a group of walrus tries to reach the safety of open water.

The walrus was once threatened by commercial hunting, but today the biggest danger it faces is climate change. Melting sea ice makes it harder to reach feeding grounds.



The walrus can turn its rear flippers forward and move on all fours when on land or ice

### Tusks

Walrus tusks are actually elongated canine teeth that grow continuously throughout their lives. Both males and females have tusks, but the males' are much longer, reaching lengths of more than 3 feet (1m). Tusks are used for fighting, to help keep holes in the ice open and for hauling themselves out of the water.

### Whiskers

Walrus have 400 to 700 stiff bristles or whiskers on their snout. Called **vibrissae**, these whiskers grow in several rows and can reach up to 12 inches (30 cm) long. The vibrissae are highly sensitive, as they are attached to muscles and are supplied with blood and nerves.

### What's for dinner

Adult walrus eat between 3% and 6% of their body weight per day. They like to feed at the bottom of shallow waters, where they find mollusks, worms, snails, softshell crabs, shrimp and sea cucumbers. They may also eat fish or scavenge the carcasses of other marine mammals.

### Bringing up baby

Male walrus mate quite late in life, some waiting until they are 15 years old. Females are sexually mature at 4 to 6 years old. Walrus mate from January through April, but they are most fertile in February. Large groups of males compete for females and can be highly aggressive. Mating takes place in the water rather than on beaches or on the ice surface.

The female will give birth to a calf (twins are very rare) about 15 to 16 months after mating. At birth, calves weigh 100 to 165 pounds (45 to 75 kg) and are born knowing how to swim. A calf will be weaned off milk in about a year, but may remain with its mother for up to five years.



Atlantic walrus  
Pacific walrus

Male Pacific walrus can reach 11.8 feet (3.6 m) long and can weigh more than 4,400 pounds (2,000 kg).



Newborn walrus are 3 to 4.5 feet (1 to 1.4 m) in length.

SOURCES: World Book Encyclopedia, World Book Inc.; <https://www.britannica.com>; <https://en.wikipedia.org>; <https://arcticwvf.org/species/walrus>; <https://oceana.org/marine-life/walrus>

© 2022 Triefeldt Studios, Inc. Distributed by Andrews McMeel Syndication

LEARN ABOUT EROSION IN THE NEXT INSTALLMENT OF WORLD OF WONDER

CASA GRANDE  
**Dispatch**

Serving Pinal County For More Than A Century

Newspapers  
in Education



OUR WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS IN EDUCATION PAGE CAN BE A FUN LEARNING TOOL FOR YOUR KIDS. CHECK BACK EACH TUESDAY FOR A NEW, EXCITING TOPIC!

CASA GRANDE  
**Dispatch**

TO SUBSCRIBE:  
**(520) 423-8685**