

THE WALRUS – THE OTHER KING OF THE ARCTIC

A KEYSTONE ARCTIC MARINE SPECIES DEPENDENT ON SEA ICE

HABITAT

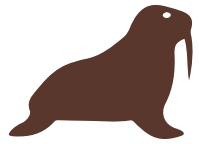
Svalbard / Arctic coast & ice fields



POPULATION
30 000
3000
in Svalbard archipelago

APPEARANCE

1.7 M



2.4 M



560 – 800 KG ♀
800 – 1000 KG ♂

55 CM

Their large tusks help them climb onto ice floes, fight, and dig into the ground when they are fishing.

Walrus are built for living in Svalbard, one of the coldest regions on Earth!

- Walrus have an air sac under their throat, which helps them float in the water so they can sleep!
- Their vibrissae, which are long, stiff whiskers located on their snouts, are very sensitive. They use them to locate their prey and fish.
- Their blubber is important, making up, on average, one-third of their weight.

Scientific Name | *Odobenus Rosmarus*

There are two main subspecies of walrus: the Atlantic and the Pacific, which occupy different areas of the Arctic. The Atlantic walrus lives in the seasonally ice-covered northern waters of Norway, Svalbard, Canada, Greenland, and Russia.

The Pacific walrus has a wide range that extends between Russia and the U.S. (Alaska), from the Bering Sea to the Chukchi Sea, as well as the Laptev Sea. It is estimated that there are around 25,000 Atlantic and approximately 200,000 Pacific walrus in the wild.



NUTRITION BASE 30 KG PER DAY



Walrus prefer mollusks—mainly bivalves such as clams. They also eat many other kinds of benthic invertebrates, including worms, gastropods, cephalopods, crustaceans, sea cucumbers, and other soft-bodied animals. Although walrus primarily feed on invertebrates, they may occasionally prey on fish such as polar cod.

SPEED



IN WATER
UP TO 30 KM/H

When walrus dive for prey, they can stay underwater for up to 30 minutes. They do not dive very deep but mostly remain in shallow coastal waters, typically up to 80 meters deep.

15 CM of subcutaneous fat protects the body from the cold.



A “KEYSTONE SPECIES” IN THE ARCTIC

The walrus has only two natural predators:

the killer whale and the polar bear. It can be a formidable foe, not only due to its massive size (a male can weigh up to 1.5 tons) but also because of its tusks, which it uses aggressively in defense and during the mating season.

The tusks, which are overgrown teeth, have other practical uses. Walrus can use them to poke holes in ice for breathing, and also to pull themselves out of the water.

Their whiskers are extremely sensitive, allowing them to detect food sources on the ocean floor. Walrus prefer to eat shellfish, such as mollusks, along with other marine organisms. The walrus's hunting and feeding processes also benefit the Arctic environment; as it forages, it disturbs the sea floor and releases nutrients into the water.

Another key feature of the walrus is its thick blubber, which insulates and protects it, helping it survive in the icy Arctic waters.

REPRODUCTION



The female gives birth once every 2 years

Gestation period
15 – 16 MONTHS

A newborn walrus is 100 – 120 cm in length and around **75KG**

After their first year, walrus pups are nearly three times the size they were at birth and begin to grow more independent, although they tend to remain very close to their highly protective mothers until they are two or three years old.

HOW CLIMATE CHANGE AFFECTS WALRUSES



Temperatures in Svalbard have increased four times more than the global average.

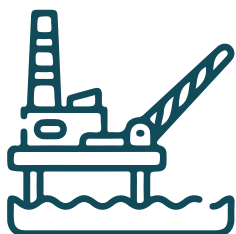


- Reduced access to food, pollution, over fishing
- Increased risk of drowning
- Decline in overall body condition
- Reduction of habitat

OTHER FACTORS

INDUSTRIAL IMPACTS

As temperatures rise, opportunities for industrial development increase. Offshore petroleum installations, deep-sea mining projects, and navigation in the fragile Arctic are expected to grow. The noise produced by these activities disrupts walrus. Such disturbances can lead to panic, which can be fatal for these animals.



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13%
of the walrus's sea ice habitat decreases every decade.



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