

Walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus*) –Taxonomic name means 'tooth-walking horse of the sea'.

Physical Description: Large marine mammal up to 3 meters (10 ft) and 1,800 kg (over 4,000 lbs) in size.

Food Web - Prey: Their large size means they eat a lot, up to 5,000 clams a day, or a combination of clam and other benthic (bottom dwelling) Invertebrates (snails, crabs, worms, sea cucumbers).

Food Web - Predator: Many Arctic subsistence hunters rely on walrus for food as well as the hide, fat, tusks and bones which they use for boat frames, fish hooks, harpoons and handicrafts.

SEA ICE & CLIMATE

Sea Ice: Walrus is a sea ice dependent species. They use it for resting between feedings, to move to new foraging areas, for birthing and nursing calves, and to separate them from predators. Generally found around the edges of the first year ice pack. Their large size requires thick ~60 cm (24 inches) ice for support, but multi year ice is too high for them to access. A keystone species the walrus mix and control the benthic habitat through their foraging.

Climate Impacts: Reductions and loss of sea ice in regions of the Arctic are forcing female walrus and their young to 'haul out' in large numbers on shore, place young walrus at risk from trampling by the larger herd, and moving them further from rich food stocks.

ADAPTIVE FEATURES

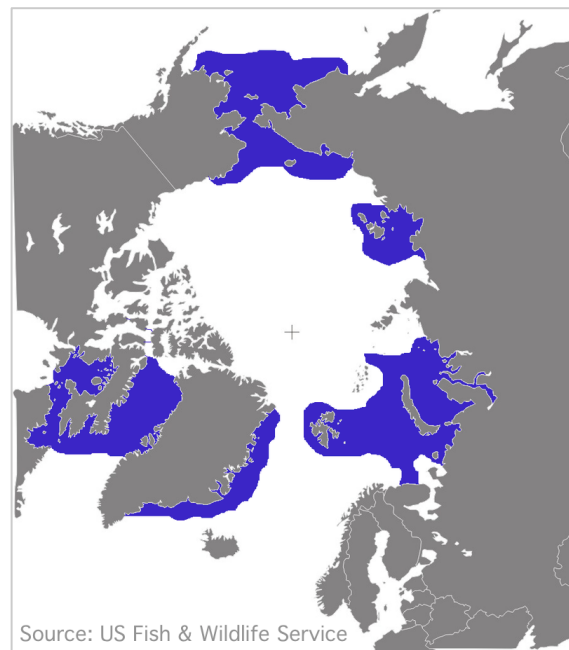
Adaptive features: Ivory Tusks - two very large front teeth that are used to hook and pull walrus onto an ice floe. This behavior is referenced in their taxonomic name. Also used to protect against polar bear or killer whale, and to attract a mate.

Whiskers -400-700 sensitive feelers are used to locate mollusks (their preferred food) on the murky ocean bottom, and are used like a broom to clear away the sediment around the shells. **Flippers** - both front and back, help walrus move in water and on land. Knobs on back flippers help grip the ice, assisting out of water movement. Front flippers sweep aside sediment that covers prey.

LIFECYCLE

Lifecycle: Males begin mating at ~15 yrs., females at 4-6 yrs. Gestation > a year, with birthing season in late spring. Females only mate every 3 years. Walrus are long lived, in the wild even up to 40 yrs. Their late gestation age and very low reproductive rate could make them a vulnerable population.

DISTRIBUTION



Distribution Map: Walrus live only in the Arctic, inhabiting mainly the shallow continental shelves and the sea ice perimeter around Alaska, Russia, Canada, Greenland and islands off Norway.

Conservation Status – Data Deficient