

All about Walruses

by Michèle Dufresne



1 Walruses are large marine mammals. They are strong swimmers that live near the freezing Arctic Circle. They like to stay in groups and can be found basking in the sun with 100 or more other walruses.



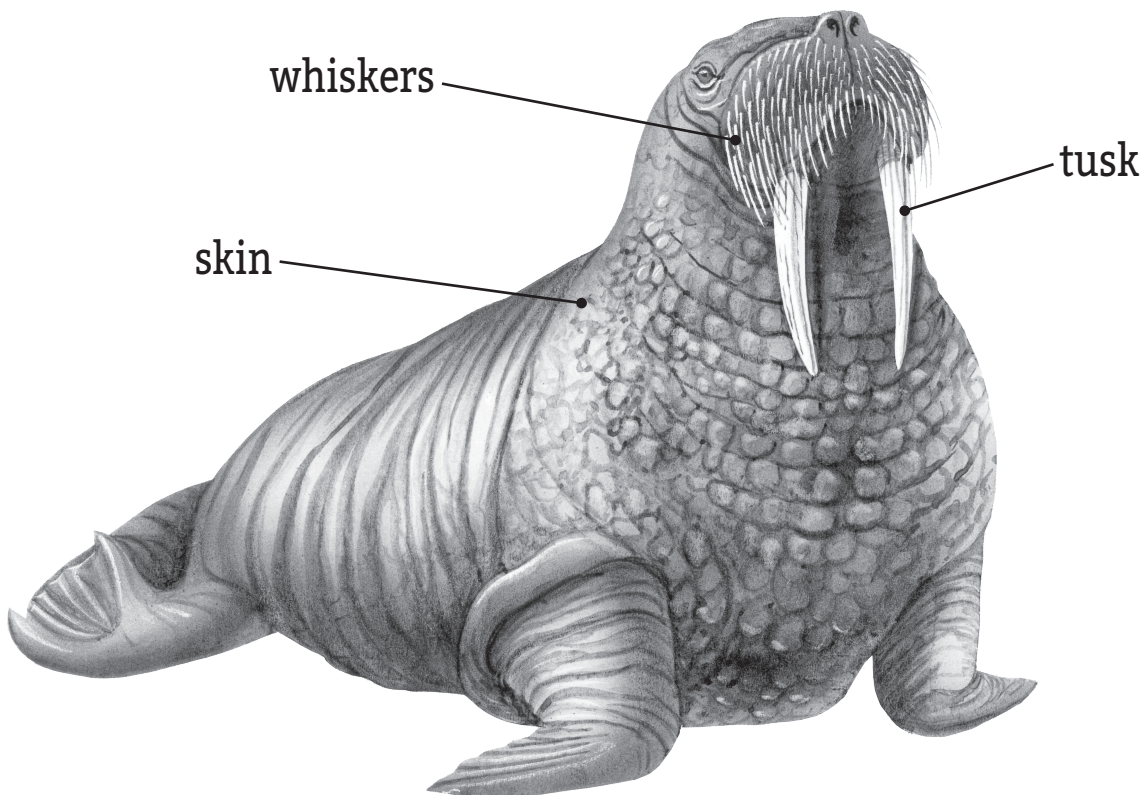
- 2 Walruses have a thick layer of fat called blubber. Whales and seals also have blubber. Blubber is important because it helps marine animals store energy and float in the water. Blubber also keeps these animals warm as they swim in the freezing waters where they live.
- 3 Walruses have long tusks that grow up to three feet long. The hooklike tusks help walruses in several ways. They use their tusks to help pull their huge bodies out of the water onto the ice. They also use them to poke through the ice to make breathing holes and to catch prey. Male walruses use their tusks to protect their area and keep

other male walrus away from the female walrus during mating season.

- 4 The walrus hunts for shellfish on the dark ocean floor with its nose. It has stiff whiskers that are very sensitive and help it feel for shellfish. The walrus doesn't chew its food. It sucks the food right out of the shell and eats it whole. A walrus can eat more than 4,000 clams during one feeding.
- 5 Long ago many walrus were hunted for their tusks, oil, skin, and meat. People used their tusks to make tools or even jewelry, and the oil was used for fuel. Walrus skin was used to make rope, and the meat was used for food. But too many were being

hunted and killed. People worried that there would no longer be any walrus. Today only Native Americans are allowed to hunt walrus for food.

- 6 The biggest threat to walrus today is from the ice melting. As our world gets warmer, the food that lives under the ice is disappearing. Walrus now have to swim farther away to hunt for food. They also face a new obstacle in the water—traffic! With less ice in the water, walrus, whales, and several seal species are encountering more ships in waters where they swim.



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Test Questions

Circle the correct answer.

1. What does the author mean by *basking in the sun*?

They like to stay in groups and can be found **basking in the sun** with 100 or more other walruses.

- a. playing in the sun
- b. lying in the sun
- c. walking in the sun
- d. exercising in the sun

2. What could be the effect if a walrus's tusks were damaged?

- a. Their tusks are three feet long.
- b. They would have a difficult time moving out of the water.
- c. Their tusks are shaped like hooks.
- d. They would have a difficult time chewing their food.

3. Long ago people hunted walruses. Why did people hunt walruses?

- a. People didn't want them to become extinct.
- b. People wanted to help prevent the ice from melting.
- c. People used their body parts to meet their survival needs.
- d. People wanted to clear the waterways for the ships.

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Test Questions (*continued*)

4. What effect could the warming waters have on walruses?

- a. It may become harder to find 4,000 clams per day.
- b. They will be able to eat 4,000 clams per day.
- c. The Native Americans will be allowed to hunt walruses.
- d. They will only hunt for shellfish on the ocean floor.

5. Which two things help to keep a walrus warm in the freezing Arctic region?

- a. long tusks and basking in the sun
- b. long tusks and sensitive whiskers
- c. layers of blubber and long tusks
- d. layers of blubber and basking in the sun