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# Marine Mammals

## Cetaceans

Cetaceans inhabit all of the world's oceans, as well as some freshwater lakes and rivers in South America, North America, and Asia. Some species, such as killer whales (orca) are found in all of the world's oceans. Others are limited to one hemisphere (e.g. Antarctic minke whales) or ocean (e.g. Pacific white-sided dolphins). Still others have highly restricted ranges. Cetaceans are exclusively aquatic. Most are species are marine, inhabiting coastal areas as well as open ocean. All cetaceans share a number of similarities:

- they have a streamlined body shape
- paddle-shaped front limbs
- tail flattened laterally and bearing horizontal flukes at the tip
- basically hairless body (some young have hair on their snouts)
- thick blubber layer filled with fat and oil
- Telescoped skull bones
- blowhole on the top of the head
- lack of sweat glands
- internal reproductive organs
- 3-chambered stomach
- airway reinforced with cartilage to the alveoli.

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Many of these characteristics are adaptations to reduce drag for fast swimming in an aquatic environment.

**Appearance:** Cetaceans are white, black, grey, bluish-grey, or pink in colour, and many are spotted, mottled, streaked, or boldly patterned. Most exhibit some countershading, tending to be lighter ventrally than dorsally.

**Weight:** They are large animals, ranging in size from 20 to 180,000 kilograms and from 1.2 to 30 meters. Blue whales are the largest animals that have ever existed.

**Climate:** Cetaceans are found in all climates, including regions where sea water is near freezing. Small cetaceans can cope with cold temperatures because they have high metabolic rates.

**Reproduction:** Most cetacean species have just one mating season per year. Females each give birth to a single calf every one to six years, after a 10 to 17 month gestation. Calving usually occurs in the warm season. Calves are born tail-first and must swim from the moment of birth. Females nurse their calves for anywhere from six months to over two years. Calves grow quickly (e.g. nursing blue whale calves gain 90 kg per day) but do not reach sexual maturity for at least two years, and do not reach sexual maturity until they are

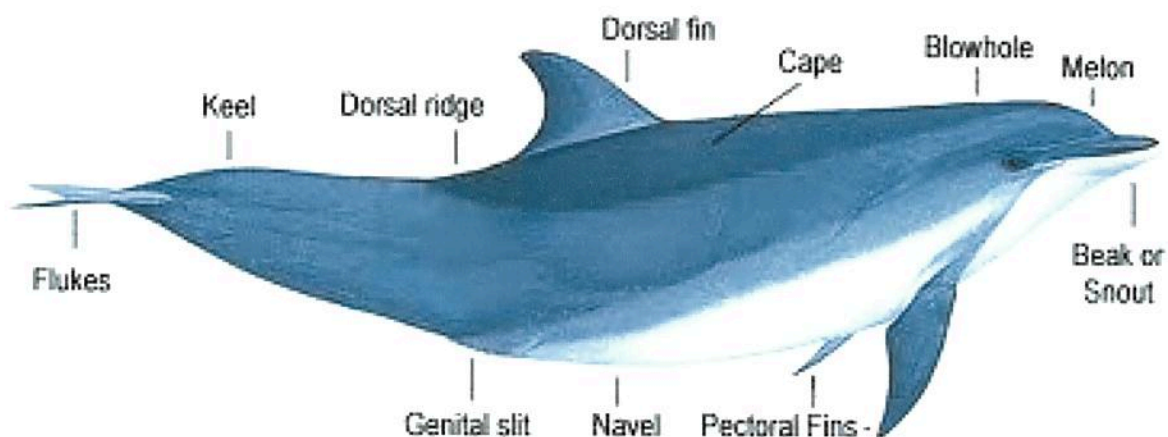
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at least 10 years old. Even after sexual maturity, cetaceans may have to wait several years before they are socially mature enough to breed.

**Diet:** Whales are filter feeders, using their baleen to strain plankton and other tiny organisms from the water. Other mammals such as dolphins primarily feed on fish, squid, and crustaceans, though the larger species also eat aquatic birds and mammals (including other cetaceans).

### Bottlenose Dolphin

- belong to the cetaceans group of marine mammals
- **Appearance:** Dolphin coloration varies, but they are generally gray in color with darker backs than the rest of their bodies.
- **Size and weight:** around 8 feet (2.5m) long and weighs between 440-660 lbs (200-300kg).
- **Diet:** consume a variety of prey including fish, squid and crustaceans.
- **Social:** Dolphins live in social groups of five to several hundred, (pods)
- **Behaviour:** Dolphins are well known for their agility and playful behaviour
- **Mating Season:** Throughout the year, though in some areas there is a peak in spring and fall. **Gestation:** 9-17 months depending on the species. When it is time to give birth, the female will distance herself from the pod, often going near the surface of the water. **Number of offspring:** Usually one calf; twins are rare.
- As soon as the calf is born, the mother must quickly take it to the surface so it can take its first breath. The calf will nurse from 11 months to 2 years, and after it is done nursing it will still stay with its mother until it is between 3 and 8 years old.



**Dangers:** Cetaceans have many natural predators such as the killer whale (orca) and occasionally the walrus. Polar bears feed on belugas stuck in the ice. Many cetaceans rely on their speed and agility to escape and avoid predators. Humans are the most major predator as they are continuously hunting cetaceans.

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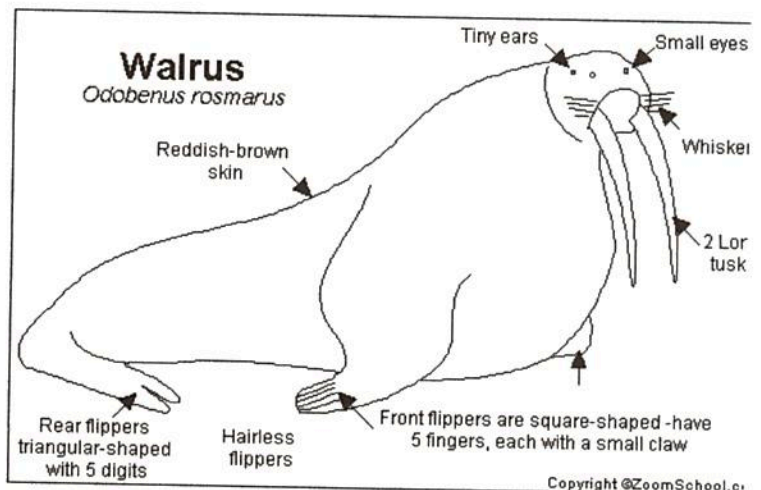
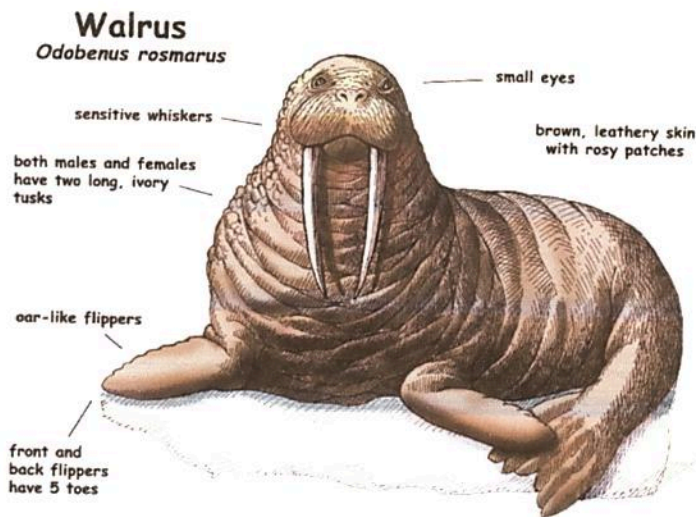
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1. The Walrus belong to the Carnivora marine mammal group. This group of marine mammals mostly include all types of seals, **walruses** and sea lions. The members of this group have features including-

- Carnivorous
- Breed on land
- Large canine teeth (or tusks)
- Flippers (some Pinniped)
- Blubber to keep warm
- Closely related to cats and dogs.

2. A Walrus is a large, flippered marine mammal that belongs to the Carnivora group. It is found in most subarctic areas of the Northern Hemisphere. They have large tusks, whiskers and a large body which can weigh up to 2000kg (a large, fully grown male walrus). Walrus' are Pinniped, meaning they are 'fin-footed'. A large portion of its weight is its blubber. This blubber will help the walrus keep warm both inside and out of the water. They have leathery skin that dries easily.



3. **Habitat-** Walruses are found mostly in the Subarctic areas of the Northern Hemisphere. They spend majority of their life on sea ice caps. They are often found in shallow shelf areas as they predominantly forage of the sea floor.

**Diet-** The Walrus has a diverse diet as it feeds on 60 different types of marine organisms. It is a carnivore. Some of the organisms that widely feature in the Walrus' diet include; shrimps, crabs, tube worms, sea cucumbers, many types of mollusc, and even other Pinniped organisms. The Walrus often forages of the sea floor, where it uses its sensitive whiskers to sense prey.

**Reproduction-** The average life span of a Walrus in the wild is between 20 and 30. Males are matured by the age of 7, whilst females are matured by 4-6 years. The birth period lasts between 15-16 months. The young are born in the Spring Migration. The calves weigh from 45-75kg at birth and can swim.

4. The Carnivora group holds many dangers. The Walrus itself is at danger from Orcas and Polar Bears. Other Carnivora organisms are at danger from sharks and even Walrus', who are higher up the food chain.