

Pinnipeds: Seals, Sea Lions and Walruses

Seals, sea lions and walruses are all members of the group of marine animals called pinnipeds. The word pinniped means fin-footed. All pinnipeds have fins at the ends of their front and hind legs. Pinnipeds live in the ocean, but they spend a good amount of time on land as well. Each type of pinniped is a little different from the others, though they have some things in common. They all have flippers for swimming and blubber to help them stay warm in the cold waters where they live. They also have waterproof hair on their skin to protect them from the water as well as from rocks and sand when they are on the shore. Seals, sea lions and walruses eat a diet that is mostly fish and squid. Because they live in very cold waters that are often covered with ice at the surface, seals have claws on the ends of their front flippers so they can make holes in the ice. The holes are known as breathing holes.

You can tell seals from sea lions and walruses because they do not have ear flaps. Their ears are small holes on the sides of their heads. Seals have small flippers, and they use their back flippers to move through the ocean. On land, seals slide on their bellies to get around. Two types of seals that live in the Pacific Ocean are harbor seals and elephant seals. Harbor seals usually stay near the shore. These seals have spotted fur, and they can weigh up to 300 pounds. Elephant seals are much larger. Female elephant seals can weigh up to 1500 pounds, while males may reach weights of 4500 pounds! Elephant seals get their name from their large noses, which look something like an elephant's trunk. Elephant seals can dive very deep into the ocean and can stay under water for up to two hours.

Sea lions may appear to be seals at first glance, but you can tell them apart from seals because sea lions have ear flaps on their heads. They also have larger flippers than seals, and they are able to turn their back flippers forward. Sea lions can use their flippers to walk on land. When they swim, they use their front flippers. Sea lions make a barking noise that sounds a lot like a dog's bark. They often lie around on rocks offshore. The most famous sea lions can be found in the Pacific waters along the coast of California.

Name _____



Date _____

Pinnipeds: Seals, Sea Lions and Walruses (Cont'd)

In San Francisco, they are well known for lounging about on the docks in the bay. Male California sea lions can weigh up to 850 pounds, while females are quite a bit smaller at up to 220 pounds.

The third type of pinniped, the walrus, has some of the traits of seals and some of sea lions. Walruses do not have ear flaps, but they are able to walk on their flippers and rotate their back flippers forward. Unlike seals and sea lions, walruses (both male and female) have tusks. Their mouths are like vacuums which they use to suck shellfish from the ocean floor for food. Walruses have air sacs in their necks that they can actually fill up and use to float. Their air sacs work something like life preservers. Walruses are quite large and can weigh as much as 3000 pounds. These animals can be found in northern parts of both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Pinnipeds: Seals, Sea Lions and Walruses Questions

1. Which pinnipeds do not have ear flaps?
 - a. seals
 - b. sea lions
 - c. walruses
 - d. All pinnipeds have ear flaps.

2. Which pinnipeds use their back flippers to swim?
 - a. seals
 - b. sea lions
 - c. walruses
 - d. None of them use their back flippers to swim.

3. Which pinnipeds have blubber to keep warm?
 - a. seals
 - b. sea lions
 - c. walruses
 - d. all of them

4. Seals, sea lions and walruses eat mostly _____ and _____.

5. Elephant seals get their name from
 - a. their size.
 - b. their large noses.
 - c. living in Africa.
 - d. All of the above

6. Elephant seals can stay under water for up to
 - a. 5 minutes
 - b. 20 minutes
 - c. 2 hours
 - d. 5 hours

Pinnipeds: Seals, Sea Lions and Walruses Questions (Cont'd)

7. Sea lions
 - a. have large front flippers.
 - b. have ear flaps.
 - c. can rotate their back flippers forward
 - d. All of these

8. Which is not true of walruses?
 - a. They have only holes for ears.
 - b. They can rotate their back flippers forward.
 - c. They have tusks.
 - d. They can weigh up to 3000 pounds.

9. Walruses have mouths like vacuums so
 - a. they can keep their part of the ocean clean.
 - b. they can drink water easily.
 - c. they can suck up shellfish for food.
 - d. None of these

10. Walruses can be found in
 - a. only the Arctic Ocean.
 - b. every ocean in the world.
 - c. the Atlantic Ocean
 - d. None of these

Name _____



Date _____

Pinnipeds: Seals, Sea Lions and Walruses Answers

1. a
2. a
3. d
4. Fish and squid
5. b
6. c
7. d
8. a
9. c
10. c