

## FIELD GUIDE TO NORTH AMERICAN MAMMALS

### Walrus

#### *(Odobenus rosmarus)*

ORDER: Carnivora

FAMILY: Odobenidae

Both male and female walrus have tusks, upper canine teeth that continue to grow throughout their lives. Males' tusks are larger and are used for display and as weapons, usually in competition with other males. Walrus occupy the continental shelf rather than deep water, feeding at depths no greater than 100 m. They eat a large variety of bottom-dwelling invertebrates, from tiny crustaceans to octopuses and large crabs. Walrus breed deep in the Arctic pack ice during the darkness of winter. Females begin breeding at 6–7 years of age, and have just one calf after a long, almost 15-month pregnancy. Males are sexually mature at about 9–10 years, but may not be successful in competing for mates until they are about 15 years old. Humans have exploited walrus for years for their ivory tusks, and also for meat, oil, and hides. Their only other predators are polar bears and killer whales, which mostly take the young.

#### Also known as:

Mores, Avik, Ayveq, Amak

#### Sexual Dimorphism:

Males are larger than females and have more prominent tusks.

#### Length:

Range: 2.5–3.5 m males; 2.3–3.1 m females

#### Weight:

Range: 590–1,656 kg males; 400–1,250 kg females



*Odobenus rosmarus* – Pacific male (left) and female (right) on ice floe; Atlantic male (smaller, smoother skin) in water (far right); males fighting (upper left)  
Credit: painting by Sandra Doyle/Wildlife Art Ltd. from *Kays and Wilson's Mammals of North America*, © Princeton University Press (2002)



### FIELD NOTES

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_ LOCATION: \_\_\_\_\_

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