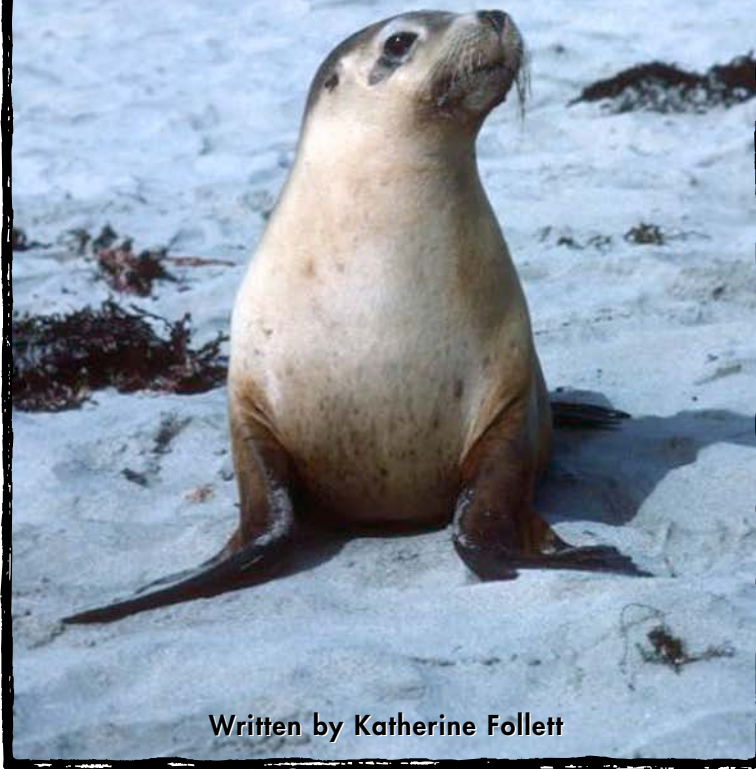


LEVELED BOOK • P

# SEALS, SEA LIONS, AND WALRUSES



Written by Katherine Follett

[www.readinga-z.com](http://www.readinga-z.com)

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A pinniped's eyes and nose are near the top of its head.

## Meet the Pinnipeds

You are sitting on a rock by the seashore. Suddenly, a pair of curious eyes peeks up from the water. As quickly as it came, the animal disappears. You are very lucky—you have seen a seal. Seals, along with sea lions and walruses, belong to a group of animals called **pinnipeds**.

Pinnipeds are **marine**, or ocean, mammals. Mammals are animals that breathe air, have fur, and have live babies that drink their mothers' milk. Pinnipeds include seals, sea lions, and walruses. Their name comes from a Greek word meaning "fin-footed." Pinnipeds have flippers instead of feet. Pinnipeds are **predators**, which means they eat other animals.



Seal



Sea lion



Walrus



Sea lions are quick, graceful swimmers.

## Life in the Ocean

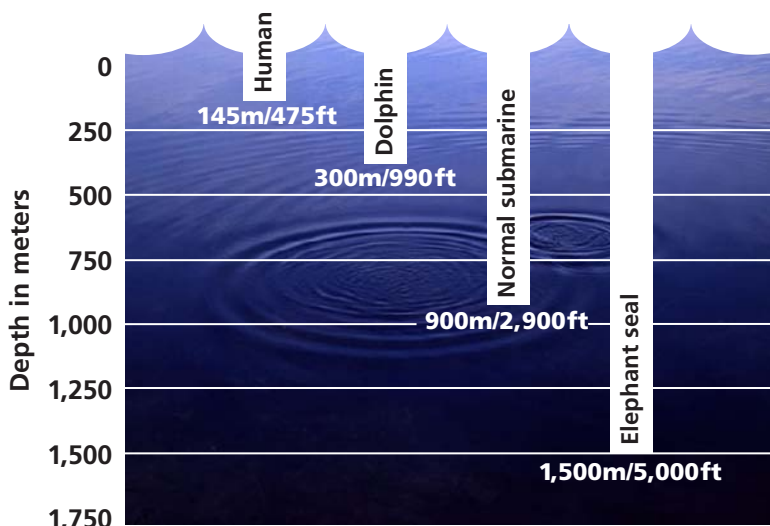
Pinnipeds spend most of their lives in the ocean. They have flippers and long, torpedo-shaped bodies to help them swim. These features make pinnipeds graceful in the water, but awkward on land.

When a pinniped goes underwater, its nose and throat shut automatically. Some seals can hold their breath for over an hour. Elephant seals can hold it for two!



Most pinnipeds eat fish, squid, octopus, and shellfish such as shrimp and clams. Pinnipeds must dive deep to find these animals. The Southern elephant seal can dive over 1,500 meters (5,000 ft)! That is deeper than any other mammal can go.

Pinnipeds have large eyes that can see in deep, dark water. They have good ears to hear their **prey** swimming around. They also have sensitive whiskers that can feel an animal swimming by or moving around on the ocean floor.



The elephant seal is a champion diver.



Some seals spend their whole lives in and around icy water.

## ~~~~~ Keeping Warm ~~~~~

Most pinnipeds live in cold oceans near the North and South Poles. How do pinnipeds keep warm? Many pinnipeds have dense fur with smooth hairs on the top and thick, fluffy hairs on the bottom. The fluffy hairs are waterproof. Pinnipeds also have a layer of fat called **blubber** that keeps heat inside their bodies. Some pinnipeds have blubber 10 centimeters (4 in) thick.

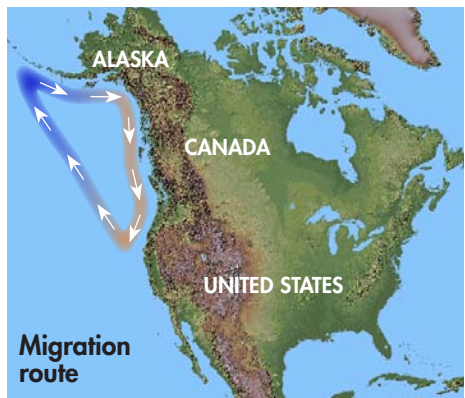




The Hawaiian monk seal is a warm-water pinniped.

Some pinnipeds do not stay in cold areas for the whole year. They **migrate**, or move, to warmer water during the winter. Other pinnipeds live in warm areas year round. Warm-water pinnipeds sometimes have trouble keeping cool under their fur and blubber.

Elephant seals migrate from Alaska to California.



## Coming to Shore

Pinnipeds come to shore, or **haul out**, to shed their fur, or **molt**, and to have babies. Some pinnipeds haul out in large groups, while others come to shore one at a time.

A pinniped mother has only one baby at a time. The baby, called a pup, can move around and swim as soon as it is born. But it does not have blubber, and it can't keep warm in



Pups can gain 2.5 kilograms (5.5 lbs) a day.

water. It usually stays on land. A baby pinniped drinks its mother's milk for the first few days or weeks of its life. Pinniped milk has lots of fat—it is more like butter than milk. This helps the pup quickly grow a layer of blubber.

## Sea Lions

Sea lions get their name because some of them have manes and roar like lions. This fur seal looks like a lion. It is called a “seal,” but it belongs in the same group as sea lions.



A fur seal

Seals and sea lions look a lot alike. The easiest way to tell them apart is to look for ears. Only sea lions have ears that stick out. Most “trained seals” at ocean parks and aquariums are actually sea lions.



A sea lion

Sea lions swim by moving their long necks and long front flippers. They use their back flippers only to steer.

Sea lions can also use their flippers to lift their bodies and “walk” on land.



Seals have rounded bodies and no visible ears.

## **Seals**

Seals have smaller necks and front flippers than sea lions. They swim by moving their back flippers and hind ends. Seals cannot “walk” on their flippers. Instead, they drag themselves along the ground or crawl like caterpillars.

The biggest pinnipeds in the world are elephant seals. Elephant seals get their name because of their huge size and long noses.

Leopard seals are fierce predators. They have big mouths and sharp teeth. They often feed on birds such as penguins. They also attack other seals. Ribbon seals have black fur with white bands. Ringed seals have small, ring-shaped markings.



An elephant seal shows off its trunk-like nose.



Walrusen don't use their tusks to dig up food. They use their lips and whiskers.



## Do You Know?

Have you ever tried to open a clamshell with your hands? It is almost impossible to do. Walrusen have very powerful mouths. They can suck a clam right out of its shell. Slurp!

## Walrusen

Walrusen are the only pinnipeds with tusks. They use their tusks to show off to other walrusen. They also use them to pull themselves up onto land. Some walrusen hook their tusks onto floating ice. Then they relax and sleep.



Walruses have very little fur. Their thick skin and blubber keep them warm. When a walrus goes into cold water, its skin turns pale. This is because all of its blood moves to the inside of its body. When the walrus is warm, its blood moves to the surface again. The walrus turns pink. Walruses like to haul out together in big heaps.



A big group of walruses can make a whole beach look pink.



Today, humans can approach seal pups but not hunt them.

## **People and Pinnipeds**

People have always hunted pinnipeds. When humans invented large ships and guns, they could hunt and kill many more pinnipeds. Soon, many pinnipeds began dying out. Humans used their fur and skin to make clothing. They ate their meat and burned their blubber as fuel. Only the native people of the far north still hunt pinnipeds. They hunt only what they need to survive.

People around the world worried about pinnipeds. Countries began making laws against hunting them. Many pinnipeds have begun to come back. But some are still in danger. Pinnipeds become caught in fishing nets. Others get sick because of pollution. Pinnipeds have very few predators, besides humans. It is up to us to decide what their future will be.



Sailors, hunters, and the Inuit carved walrus tusks into art called scrimshaw. Today, only the Inuit can hunt walruses.



## Glossary



<b>blubber</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	fat that lies under the skin and keeps an animal warm (p. 8)
<b>haul out</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to leave the water and come ashore (p. 10)
<b>marine</b> ( <i>adj.</i> )	living in the ocean (p. 5)
<b>migrate</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to move from one habitat to another (p. 9)
<b>molt</b> ( <i>v.</i> )	to shed an old fur coat and grow a new one (p. 10)
<b>pinnipeds</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	a group of marine mammals with flippers instead of feet; seals, sea lions and walruses (p. 4)
<b>predators</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	animals that hunt and eat other animals (p. 5)
<b>prey</b> ( <i>n.</i> )	the animals that a predator hunts and eats (p. 7)

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