



**PACIFIC WALLRUS  
CANADA, Nunavut  
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**PHOTO ENTRY**

Odobenus rosmarus divergens

*Morsa del Pacifico* (Sp), *Pazifisches Walross* (G), *Morse Pacifique* (F). Given the subspecific name *divergens* because its tusks were thought to be more widely spread than those of the Atlantic walrus.

**DESCRIPTION** (*male*) Head and body length 10-12 feet (3.0 to 3.7 m). Height up to five feet (1.5 m). Weight 2,000-3,500 pounds (900-1,600 kg). Females are about one-third the size of males. The Pacific walrus is larger than the Atlantic walrus, and has considerably larger tusks. Male tusks are nearly straight and may exceptionally attain a length of as much as 39-40 inches (99-102 cm). Female tusks are curved, more slender, and only 60 percent as long as those of the male. The snout of the male Pacific walrus is squarer and the jaw more jutting than in the Atlantic walrus. The nostrils of the Pacific walrus are not visible when viewed from the front, whereas those of the Atlantic walrus are.

**DISTRIBUTION** The Bering and Chukchi seas, which lie between Siberia and Alaska, and eastward along the northern coast of Alaska.

The Pacific walrus is also found in Asia about as far west as Cape Olyutorskiy on the Bering Sea and Cape Shelagskiy on the Chukchi Sea.

**REMARKS** The walrus is the only truly marine mammal that is considered big game. Back when it was lawful to hunt Pacific walrus in the Bering Sea (1979 and earlier), it was hunted in the spring when the great herds of males migrated northward with the last of the retreating ice. (The females and young had preceded them to the Chukchi Sea.) The hunt was conducted from rural villages and guided by skilled native hunters. The hardest part was locating the ice floes where the walrus were resting, then getting there and back again safely. This could entail many miles of rough

ocean travel in a small boat, frequently in fog. It was common to spend days in the village waiting for storm waves to abate so boats could venture out. (Small, flat-bottomed boats were used because it often was necessary to portage across ice floes. Historically, Native people hunted walrus from skin-covered, paddle-powered unimaks, but today's craft is usually aluminum with an outboard motor.) Within the shelter of the ice floes, one encountered a different world from the stormy Bering Sea, with calm water and beautiful ice islands of every shape and size. Walrus are sometimes not too difficult to approach, for their senses are not acute and they tend to be unwary, even asleep. The selected bull would be stalked as closely as possible, because a brain shot is needed to prevent it from flopping into the water and sinking to the bottom. As a precaution, the Native guides would rush forward after the shot to plunge his harpoon, the harpoon point would toggle under the animal's thick skin, and the rawhide line would be secured to an ice block.

When mounting a walrus head, it is recommended that the tusks be held in place with removable pins so the tusks can be taken out to be measured. Tusks that have been cemented in place cannot be measured or certified for the Record Book.

