

Polar Pinnipeds



Ringed Seal (*Pusa hispida*)

- **Population:** Several million (most abundant Arctic seal).
- **Size:** ~1.5 m, 50–70+ kg.
- **Dive capacity:** depths ~50–100+ m.
- **Diet:** Small fish (cod, smelt), crustaceans.
- **Fun fact:** Engineers of the ice — they claw open breathing holes and build snow lairs for pups.



Bearded Seal (*Erignathus barbatus*)

- **Population:** ~500,000–750,000.
- **Size:** 2.1–2.5 m, 200–450 kg.
- **Dive capacity:** ~20 minutes; depths up to 300 m.
- **Diet:** Clams, snails, sculpins, cod, steady benthic (seafloor) forager.
- **Fun fact:** Their long whiskers act like tactile sensors, “feeling” prey on the seafloor.



Harp Seal (*Pagophilus groenlandicus*)

- **Population:** ~7.5 million.
- **Size:** 1.7–1.9 m, 130–180 kg.
- **Dive capacity:** ~15 minutes; depths ~300 m.
- **Diet:** Capelin, herring, crustaceans.
- **Fun fact:** Maybe most famous because of white pups. One of the few pinnipeds to migrate between feeding, breeding and molting grounds



Hooded Seal (*Cystophora cristata*)

- **Population:** ~600,000.
- **Size:** 2–2.6 m, 200–300+ kg.
- **Dive capacity:** ~25 minutes; depths ~1000 m.
- **Diet:** Fish, squid.
- **After 12 days** pups are left to take care of themselves
- **Fun fact:** Males inflate a red nasal “hood” like a balloon for display.



Ribbon Seal (*Histriophoca fasciata*)

- **Population:** ~200,000.
- **Size:** 1.6–1.8 m, 70–120 kg.
- **Dive capacity:** ~20 minutes; depths ~200 m.
- **Diet:** Fish, squid.



Walrus (*Odobenus rosmarus*)

- Weight:** Up to 3,500 pounds (1,600 kg) – as heavy as a small car!
- Length:** 7–12 feet (2.2–3.6 m)
- Lifespan:** 40+ years
- Blubber:** 6 inches thick for insulation
- Tusks:** Can grow 3 feet long, never stop growing



Leopard Seal (*Hydrurga leptonyx*)

- **Population:** ~220,000.
- **Size:** 3–3.5 m, 300–500 kg.
- **Dive capacity:** ~15–20 minutes; depths ~300 m.
- **Swim speed:** Fast ambush bursts.
- **Diet:** Penguins, seals, fish, squid.
- **Fun fact:** Apex predator; known to “porpoise” to snatch penguins.



Weddell Seal (*Leptonychotes weddellii*)

- **Population:** ~500,000–1,000,000.
- **Size:** ~3 m, 400–450 kg.
- **Dive capacity:** >70 minutes; depths up to 600 m.
- **Swim speed:** Efficient endurance swimmers.
- **Diet:** Fish, squid, krill.
- **Fun fact:** Most southerly mammal; their calls echo under the ice



Southern Elephant Seal (*Mirounga leonina*)

- **Population:** ~650,000.
- **Size:** Males 4.5–6 m, up to 4,000 kg.
- **Dive capacity:** 2 hours; depths >1,500 m (record pinniped divers).
- **Swim speed:** Efficient ocean cruisers.
- **Diet:** Fish, squid



Antarctic Fur Seal (*Arctocephalus gazella*)

- **Population:** ~4–5 million.
- **Size:** 1.3–1.7 m, females ~150 kg, males much larger.
- **Dive capacity:** ~10 minutes; depths ~100 m.
- **Swim speed:** Quick, agile hunters.
- **Diet:** Krill, fish.
- **Fun fact:** Rebounded from near-extinction after 19th-century hunting