

Bearded seal *Erignathus barbatus*



🇫🇮 Granarkópur 🇩🇪 Ussuk 🇳🇴 Kampselur/Granselur/Kampur 🇩🇰 Storkobbe 🇩🇰 Remmesæl



Adult bearded seal © Ondrej Prosicky/Shutterstock.com

Bearded seals are the biggest **true seals** in the North Atlantic, reaching over two metres in length. Their weight varies significantly throughout the year between 250 and 300 kilograms, however, the largest bearded seal recorded was a female weighing astounding 432 kilograms! They got their name after to the long, white, sensitive **whiskers** they have on their snouts. In English, they are also called “square **flipper**” due to their large, **pectoral fins** that have flattened ends. Bearded seals can be found all over the Arctic region, with two distinct **subspecies**, the Atlantic and the Pacific one.

Adult length 2.7 metres
Adult weight 430 kg
Maximum age 30 years
Eats clams, shrimps, fish, squid
Group size solitary, small groups
Predators polar bears, walrus,

killer whales, Greenland shark
IUCN status near threatened (2024)
Arctic abundance around 750,000
Hunted in 🇩🇪 892 seals/year
mean 2019-2023 🇩🇰 19 seals/year

Main threats:



Climate change



Pollution



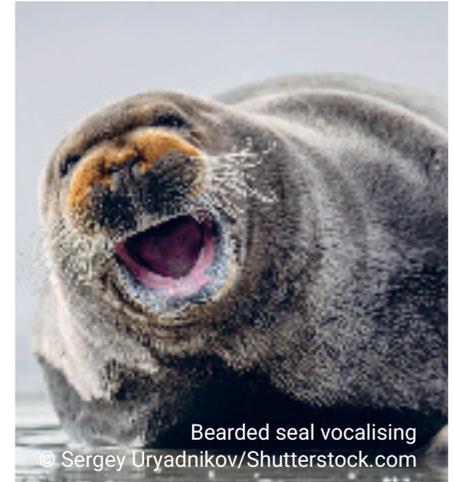
Noise disturbance

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Besides being the largest, bearded seals are also among the loudest seals. Adult bearded seals produce a variation of loud musical trills, grunts and moans that can be heard as far as 45 kilometres away! The seals **vocalise** throughout the year, but the peak is in the **breeding season**. The elaborate songs are individually distinct, and males use them to both attract females and to defend their territory. Females also **vocalise**, but not to the same extent as males.



Bearded seal vocalising © Sergey Uryadnikov/Shutterstock.com



Bearded seal pup © NOAA

Pups are larger than in other seal **species**. Born at about 1.3 metres and 35 kilograms on drifting ice, having shed their **lanugo** coat, they enter the water only hours after birth, diving to depths of 200 metres. They nurse from 18 to 24 days and consume about 8 litres of milk per day with 50% fat content. They grow rapidly at an average rate of 3.3 kilograms per day and weigh about 100 kilograms at weaning. They are very good divers, going to greater depths than adults. In their first year they dive to 450 metres depth, while adult bearded seals usually dive to 200–300 metres.



Research: Climate change has a really big impact in the Arctic environment. What kind of changes will bearded seals experience in a warmer Arctic and with melting **sea ice**?