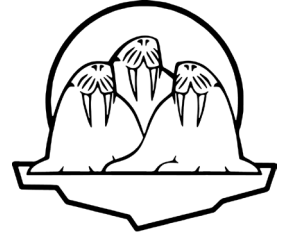


the Walrus News



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AIVIIT HUNTERS AND TRAPPERS
ORGANIZATION



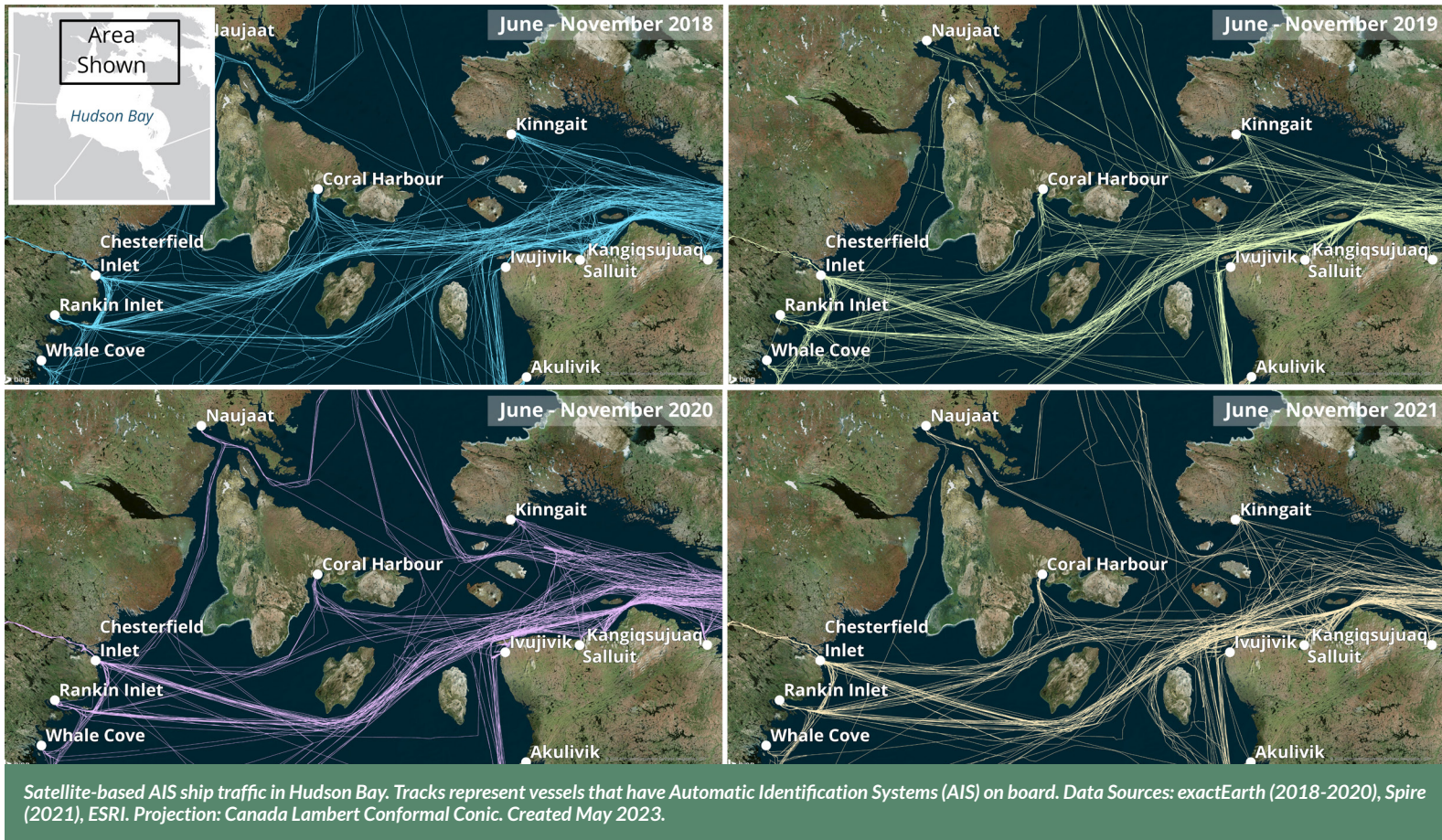
The Walrus News is published by Oceans North and the Aiviit Hunters and Trappers Organization.

The Walrus News is a newsletter for the Hamlet of Salliq (Coral Harbour) that highlights new research, shares local knowledge, stories, and photos, and keeps the community informed about developments that relate to walrus and their broader habitat.

This edition of the Walrus News includes:

- Shipping activity around Southampton Island
- Walrus drawings and questions from Sakku School students
- Recent research on where to find Arctic kelp





Your Waters, Your Rules: Having a Say in Shipping

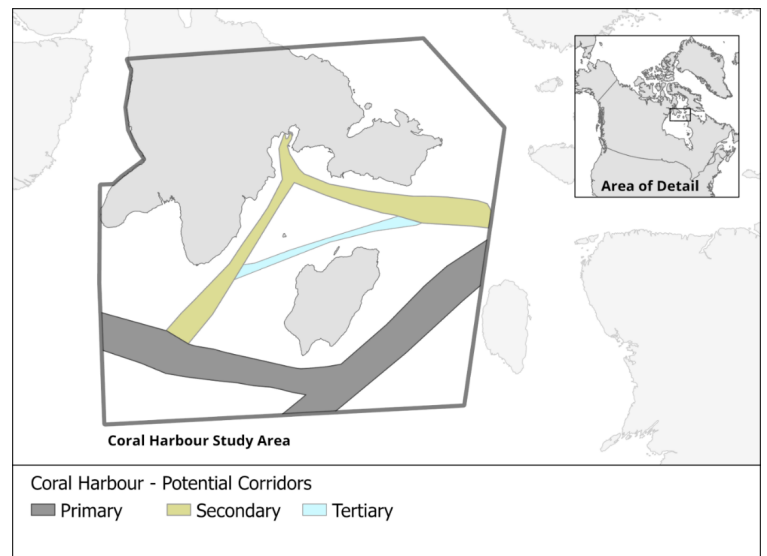
The community of Coral Harbour has raised concerns in the past about nearby ship traffic. These ships often travel between Coats Island and Walrus Island, an area of high ecological and cultural importance that's home to many marine mammals, including walrus, seals and beluga. It's also a common travel route for local hunters and boaters.



The community has requested a buffer zone around Walrus Island and Coats Island so that ships don't go too close to sensitive areas like walrus haulouts. A request to Agnico Eagle to voluntarily take the route south of Coats Island was adopted in 2019, and you can see from this picture of the vessel traffic that many ships did not go near Walrus Island that year.

In January 2023, the Aiviit HTO officially requested to the Government of Canada that this route become the recommended route for all vessels not stopping in the community. **See the map below for the shipping corridor request made by the HTO.**

These recommendations, including the tertiary route, reflect community requests and provide adequate space between vessels and walrus haulouts.



Community-proposed change to the corridors between Coats Island and Southampton Island

What Do Walrus Eat?

In February, students from Sakku School sent in questions they had about walrus. We asked some local hunters to answer them.

How are walrus classified?

Walrus are marine mammals. They are also part of a group of animals called “pinnipeds,” which includes seals.

How long do they live?

Walrus can live long enough that their tusks wear down to short stubs. Eating, and even their breath, can wear down parts of the tusk over the years. Walrus can live up to 40 years, or perhaps more.

How big can walrus grow?

Walrus can grow to 18 feet depending on maturity and weigh up to 1,500 kilograms. Females are often smaller than males.

Do walrus change colour?

Walrus do not change colour like other Arctic animals as the seasons change. However, they can look brown when they are out of water and look grey when they are in the water.

Are they predators or prey? What do they eat?

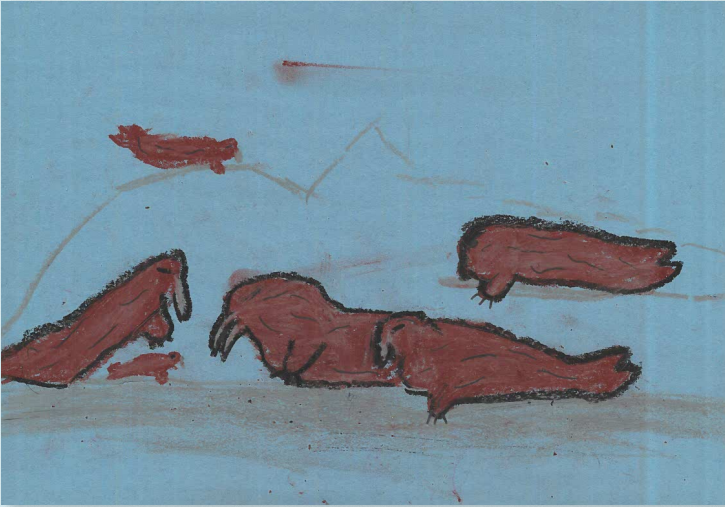
Walrus eat clams. A lot of clams. When a walrus is hunted we look inside their stomach. It usually looks empty, but that's because they digest the gooey clams very quickly. Walrus can also hunt ringed seals.

Walrus are prey for polar bears, killer whales, and humans.

(Photo Credit: Wesley Siutnuar)



Walrus Artwork from Students of Sakku School



Esther Paniyuk | Grade 5



Millie Bruce | Grade 2



Savannah Kudluk | Grade 2



Uriah Siutinar | Grade 2



Keisha Kabluitok | Grade 4

The Trees of the Seas



(Photo Credit: Ignacio Garrido)

Kelp is a large brown seaweed that is found throughout the world's oceans. Like trees on land, kelp can form forests that provide areas of shade, protection, and a source of food for many species. In fact, the presence of kelp in the water indicates that those areas are nutrient rich, as kelp require nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus to grow.



WHERE IS KELP IN THE ARCTIC?

There are 4 main types of kelp found in the Arctic: winged kelp (*Alaria esculenta*), sea colander kelp (*Agarum clathratum*), sugar kelp (*Saccharina latissima*), and Arctic suction-cup kelp (*Laminaria solidungula*).

Kelp is found worldwide in shallow waters, most commonly at depths of 5–20 metres. But in the Arctic, kelp can be found as deep as 50 metres because the clear waters allow sunlight to reach deeper areas. Kelp can grow on sandy, pebbly, and rocky surfaces, as well as on top of boulders and bedrock.

“Around Southampton Island, *Saccharina latissima* forests grow so tall and are occupied by so many invertebrates and fish. You would never suspect, looking at the bare rocky shores, that so much is going on just a few metres down in the water,” says Camille Lavoie, a PhD student at Laval University who studies Arctic kelp.

Through field sampling, historical museum records, and past research, a first-of-its-kind map has been created to identify where different species of Arctic kelp can be found.

While the map shows where Arctic kelp has been found so far, it's not complete. Any sparse areas more likely reflect a lack of data rather than the absence of kelp. Most kelp forests have been recorded through diving studies and underwater cameras, which limit study areas only to human-accessible areas. This makes tracking long-term changes from climate change difficult, as we are still just learning about these kelp forests.



Did You Know?

Some species of kelp have gas-filled bladders that allow them to float, just like some fish do. This allows them to grow upwards in the water and get more energy from the sun.



All photos taken by Ignacio Garrido around Southampton Island.

“Kelp forests act as an “oasis of life” underwater and show a richness that we should seek to protect,” Lavoie says. **“For example, our team represented kelp as an important ecological component for what could soon become the Southampton Island Marine Protected Area (currently an Area of Interest).”**

CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACTS ON ARCTIC KELP

Climate change will have complex impacts on kelp in the Arctic. Some research suggests that a warmer Arctic with less sea ice will benefit kelp by providing warmer waters and longer periods of light. Other research suggests that increased coastal erosion from bigger waves and rain may bring more sediments into the ocean, potentially blocking sunlight.

COMMUNITY USE

Understanding how climate change will affect Arctic kelp is important for many communities across the Arctic that use it for food, medicine, and to understand coastal systems. Winged kelp and Arctic suction-cup kelp are a very nutritious food and provide a good source of calcium, copper, and chromium. Kelp can be eaten either fresh, dried, or cooked, like in seal soup.

Do you have any kelp traditions or recipes? Send them to us and we can include them in our next newsletter!

Walrus Tales

Beware the Lone Walrus

By Leonard Netser

“One elder told me walrus and people are alike in some ways. People who are mean and aggressive are loners. Other people do not like mean aggressive people and avoid them. So is the way of the walrus. A mean, aggressive walrus is a loner because other walrus know they may be beaten up brutally by them. Be sure to avoid these loners in the wild as they are very dangerous.”





(Photo Credit: Leonard Netser)

Hunting Data Collection

Oceans North and the Aiviit HTO have a program to encourage more data collection on local beluga and walrus populations. The data sheets are available at the HTO and the information will help both the HTO and the community better understand these important species.

A fully completed data sheet with an accompanying photo of the harvested animal will be compensated with **\$150**. There is a maximum of 5 harvest sheets per family, per year.

A community meeting will be held in June 2023 to discuss the successes and challenges of this program. Your feedback will help to improve it for the next season.

Stay tuned: We will announce the meeting on Facebook and at the HTO office.

Don't forget: DFO is also looking for data and samples! Ask the HTO for more details. Compensation for complete DFO data cards and sampling kit is **\$120**.

Harvest Sheet: 5125/Animal

Harvested Mammal Information

Sex: Male Female Pregnant (yes or no) _____ Age: Adult Juvenile Calf

Skin colour: Brown Dark Grey Light Grey White

Fat colour: White Yellow

Fat/Blubber Thickness: Fat Normal Skinny _____ inches

*Stomach contents: Empty Some food Full Didn't check

Stomach contents description (or photo): _____

Measurements:
 Body Length: _____ feet _____ inches Body Width (at widest spot): _____ feet _____ inches
 Tusk(s) Length: _____ feet _____ inches Tusk Width (at widest spot): _____ feet _____ inches

Observation Sheet: 525

2022 Marine Mammal Community Monitoring Datasheet

Harvest Date: _____

Hunters Name: _____

Location (GPS or mark area): _____


Site Description: Floe edge Open water Ice Land

Species: Walrus Beluga

How many animals were seen? Adults #: _____ Calves #: _____

Harvest Method: Harpoon Gun Net

How many animals were: Struck #: _____ Landed #: _____ Lost #: _____




Photos by Ray Netser (left) and Bridget Saviakjuk (right).

SEND US YOUR WALRUS STORIES & PHOTOS!

If you have an interesting story about walrus or a nice picture of a walrus, please send it to us and we may feature it in our next newsletter. The featured stories and photos will also get a small prize!

Email your stories and photos to: colleenturlo@oceansnorth.ca. For photos, please be sure to include: Your name, a short description of the photo, and when and where the photo was taken.

