



Scientists Capture Narwhal Noises in Arctic

Why do narwhals have a tusk?

- Some theories suggest it might be used as a weapon, for breaking through the ice to make breathing holes or for sensing changes in the ocean around them.
- However, some scientists think that a narwhal's tusk may just be for decoration.

Scientists have captured the noise of narwhals for the first time. The noise they heard was quite surprising.

These breathtaking animals may look like something from a story book, but they are in fact a type of whale called narwhals.

Narwhals are famous for their tusks which are actually a tooth pushing through their lip. They are sometimes called the unicorns of the sea.

Despite their **intriguing** appearance, studying them can be hard. They spend a lot of their time up to one mile deep in the Arctic Ocean. They are also well known for being shy.

Both of these things have made getting close enough to learn more about narwhals a bit tricky.

Despite this, scientists have recently managed to record some of the noises that these majestic mammals make.

A small team of scientists were listening to the sounds of **glaciers** melting in Greenland. They noticed that the whales were in the area and decided to record the narwhals as well.

The scientists set up microphones to dangle beneath their boat.

As quiet as they were, it was sometimes difficult for the scientists to hear the narwhals. One of the scientists, Evgeny Podolskiy, said that with ice cracking and air bubbles melting it sounded "like a fizzy drink underwater".

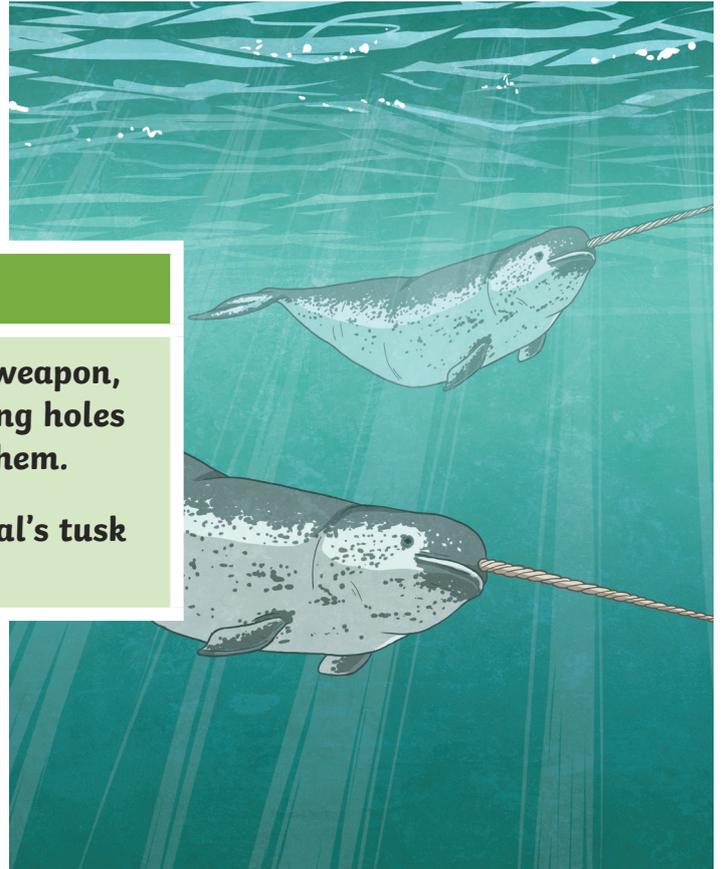


Illustration: A pair of narwhals.

Nevertheless, they managed to capture the narwhals making several **distinct** noises.

They recorded them whistling when **communicating** with other narwhals. This sounds a bit like a drill. They also found that the narwhals made a rapid clicking sound when trying to locate food. When very close to food, though, they made a buzzing sound a bit like a chainsaw.

The scientists hope that their research will be useful in the future when trying to better understand narwhals and their habitat.

Glossary

communicating	To share information.
intriguing	Interesting or strange.
glaciers	A slow moving mass of ice.
distinct	Noticeably different from something similar.

Questions

1. What is a narwhal's 'tusk' made from?

2. How do you think scientists will feel about this news?

3. Tick whether each statement is a fact or an opinion according to the information in the article?

	Fact	Opinion
Narwhals are beautiful animals.		
Narwhals communicate with each other.		
Narwhals are fascinating.		
Narwhals are a type of whale.		

4. In the paragraph starting "The scientists set up the microphones..." Which word means to "hang or swing loosely."

5. Locate in the article one example of why studying narwhals can be tricky.

6. Summarise the key information in the story in 15 words or fewer.

Answers

1. What is a narwhal's 'tusk' made from?

A tooth

2. How do you think scientists will feel about this news?

Accept any reasonable answer which refers to narwhal's being difficult to learn about, e.g. I think scientists will be very excited because they managed to hear and record narwhal sounds even though they are tricky animals to get close to and learn about.

3. Tick whether each statement is a fact or an opinion according to the information in the article?

	Fact	Opinion
Narwhals are beautiful animals.		✓
Narwhals communicate with each other.	✓	
Narwhals are fascinating.		✓
Narwhals are a type of whale.	✓	

4. In the paragraph starting "The scientists set up the microphones..." Which word means to "hang or swing loosely."

Dangle

5. Locate in the article one example of why studying narwhals can be tricky.

Accept an answer referring to them either spending a lot of their time up to one mile deep in the Arctic Ocean or being shy.

6. Summarise the key information in the story in 15 words or fewer.

Accept any reasonable answer that refers to the information in the story in 15 words or fewer, e.g. Scientists have captured the noises of narwhals and found they sound like drills.