



Narwhal Noises

Why do narwhals have a tusk?

- Narwhals 'tusks' are actually made by a tooth pushing through their lip.
- Some people think it is for decoration, others think it is a weapon or for breaking through ice.

Illustration: Some narwhals.

Scientists Capture Narwhal Whistle

Scientists have been trying to record the noise of a narwhal for a long time. Now, they have managed it and the noise has surprised them.

Narwhals are known as unicorns of the sea because of their unusual tusk. They may look like something from a storybook, but these are in fact a type of whale called narwhals.

Narwhals can be shy. They also spend a lot of time up to one mile deep in the cold waters of the [Arctic](#).

Both of these things have made learning more about them a bit tricky.

Scientists have now recorded some of the noises that these [majestic](#) mammals make.

They had to float quietly up to the narwhals in a boat with the engine switched off. They then placed microphones under water to record their noises.

Evgeny Podolskiy was one of the scientists. He said that the ice cracking and air bubbles melting sounded, "like a fizzy drink under water".

Despite all the sounds under water, the scientists managed to record the narwhals

making several [distinct](#) noises.

They recorded them whistling. The narwhals did this talking to other narwhals. It sounds a bit like a drill.

They also found that the narwhals made a [rapid](#) clicking sound when trying to find food.

When they were close to food, they made a buzzing sound a bit like a chainsaw. The closer they got to the food the quicker the sound became.

The scientists hope this will help us better understand narwhals and their habitats.

Glossary

Arctic	The regions around the North Pole.
majestic	Being very beautiful, dignified or impressive.
distinct	Noticeably different from something similar.
rapid	Very quick.

Questions

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

- hair
- a tooth
- magic
- skin

2. In the paragraph beginning "Despite all the sounds under water, the scientists managed to record the narwhals making several distinct noises." Find a word which means "More than two but not many."

3. Find a piece of evidence in the text which shows that it was hard to capture the narwhals' noise.

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

	Fact	Opinion
Narwhals make several noises.		
Narwhals are fascinating.		
Narwhals are beautiful animals.		
Narwhals can swim a mile deep.		

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

6. Summarise the key information in the news story in 20 words or fewer.

Answers

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

- hair
 a tooth
 magic
 skin

2. In the paragraph beginning "Despite all the sounds under water, the scientists managed to record the narwhals making several distinct noises." Find a word which means "More than two but not many."

several

3. Find a piece of evidence in the text which shows that it was hard to capture the narwhals' noise.

Accept an answer referring to: Narwhals being hard to find because they are shy; spending a lot of time up to one mile deep in the cold waters of the Arctic; the scientists having to float quietly up to the narwhals.

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

	Fact	Opinion
Narwhals make several noises.	✓	
Narwhals are fascinating.		✓
Narwhals are beautiful animals.		✓
Narwhals can swim a mile deep.	✓	

5. 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 have been trying to record the noise of narwhal for a long time.

6. Summarise the key information in the news story in 20 words or fewer.

Accept any reasonable answer that summarises the story in 20 words or fewer, e.g. Scientists have recorded the noises of narwhals. They have discovered using microphones that they sound like drills.