

Field Museum News

Published Monthly by Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago

Vol. 9

NOVEMBER, 1938

No. 11

NARWHALS, SMALL WHALES ARMED WITH SPEARS, ARE SHOWN IN NEW EXHIBIT

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One of the most unusual "groups" ever to be made as a museum exhibit has just been opened in the Hall of Marine Mammals (Hall N). This is no less than a group of whales—small whales to be sure, but nevertheless whales in the broad sense of the term. It is, so far as known, the first habitat group of whales to be shown in any museum.

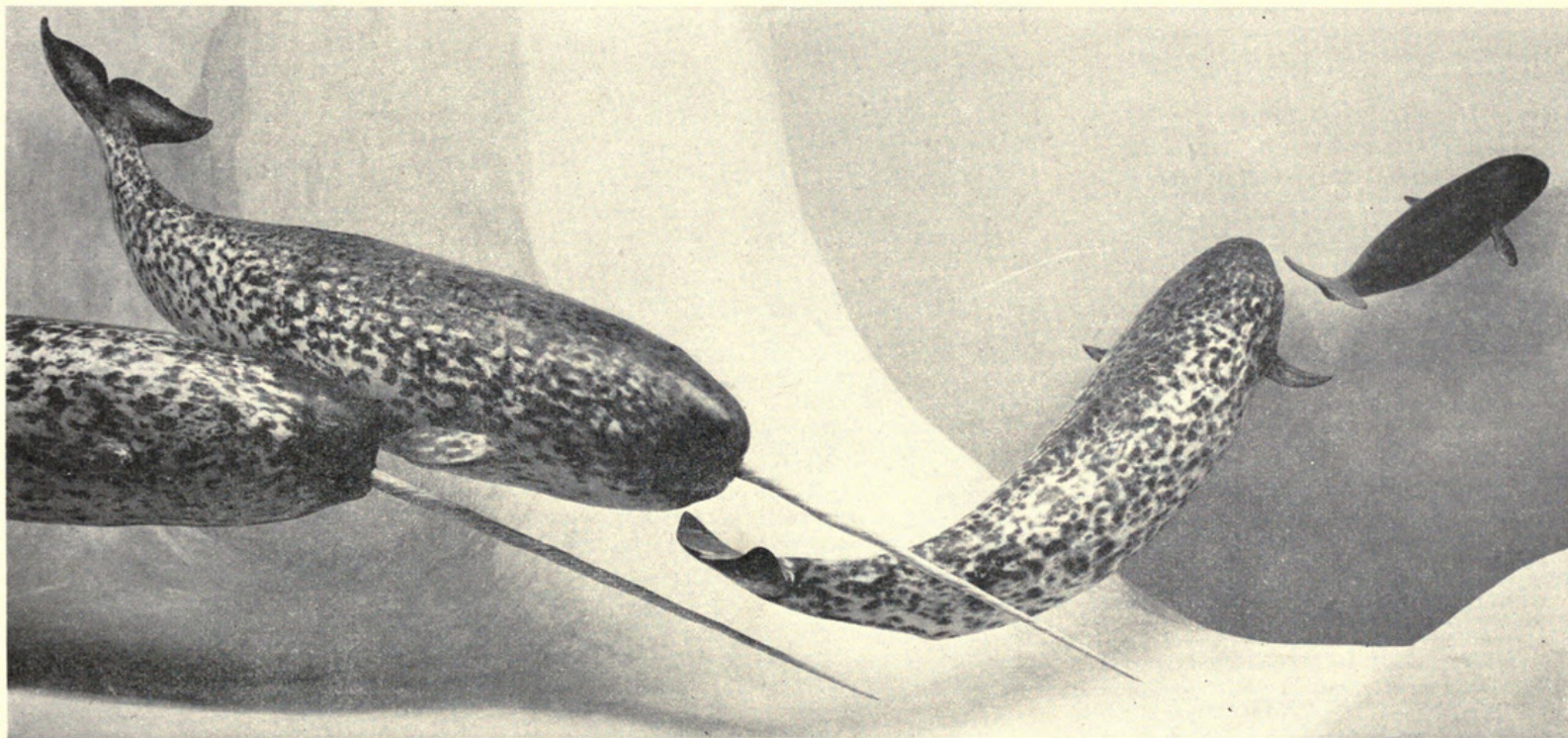
A few years ago Captain Robert A. Bartlett, the well-known Arctic explorer, was commissioned to obtain for the Museum

caught, the original specimen weighed about 2,200 pounds.

The narwhal is rather closely related to the beluga or white whale, but differs from this and all other whales and dolphins in its long rapier-like tusk. This tusk, which is an elongated tooth, is developed only in the male and appears to be no more than a distinctive mark of sex rather than an organ of defense or offense. Despite its threatening appearance, the narwhal is reported to be a very inoffensive animal. It has never been known to attack a boat as the sword-

breath. At times it is trapped in shallow bays where deep ice prevents its return to wider seas, and then it is easily captured in large numbers by natives who use it for food and many other purposes.

Although most other whales and dolphins are plain in color, the narwhal is marbled or mottled with grayish or brownish on a creamy background. There is much variation, and very aged individuals may be almost entirely white. The narwhal feeds on soft-bodied marine life, and some fishes, including even those as large as halibut.



Narwhals—A Small Species of Whale

New habitat group added to the Hall of Marine Mammals. The animals are reproduced in cellulose-acetate, in conformity with original specimens and data collected by an expedition led by Captain Robert A. Bartlett, noted Arctic explorer. The group was prepared by Staff Taxidermist Leon L. Walters, inventor of the process used in making the reproductions, and Assistant Taxidermist E. G. Laybourne. The background, representing the submerged part of an iceberg, was painted by Staff Artist Arthur G. Rueckert.

specimens of the peculiar cetacean known as the narwhal. These he found in Inglefield Gulf, North Greenland. Skins of males with tusks, females without tusks, and young, were preserved, and photographs, measurements, and careful notes were taken by Dr. Soutter, a member of the party. Owing to the delicate structure of the skins it was not possible to use them in preserved form for the exhibit, but they served as an accurate and reliable basis for life-size models in cellulose-acetate which were prepared by Staff Taxidermist Leon L. Walters assisted by Mr. Edgar G. Laybourne. These have been arranged as a group with a background, painted by Staff Artist Arthur G. Rueckert, which represents the submerged base of an iceberg, a typical habitat of the species. Four animals are shown: two males, a female, and a newly-born young. The largest has a body fifteen feet long, and a tusk seven feet long. When

fish does, and animals wounded or killed by its spear are never found. Normally only one tusk, on the left side, is evident, while a second remains in rudimentary condition on the other side. Occasionally both are developed to nearly or quite the same length. Tusks six to eight feet long are not uncommon. They are spirally twisted, hollow almost to the tip, and very brittle, so the ivory has but little value commercially.

What is known of the habits of this animal must be gleaned from the reports of whalers and Arctic explorers or from the accounts given by natives. Few naturalists ever have seen it, and careful observations are scanty. It is confined to icy northern seas, and only in rare instances has it wandered as far south as the British Isles. It goes in small schools numbering up to twenty or more. Being a warm-blooded animal, it must come to the surface to

These it crushes with its tough jaws and swallows without mastication, since it has no functional teeth.

The cellulose-acetate process used in preparing this group has been applied in the past to the preparation of exhibits of reptiles, and to large mammals such as the hippopotamus and rhinoceros. For hairless or nearly hairless creatures of these kinds, the Walters process, Museum authorities are agreed, produces more satisfactory, and actually "more natural" results than are obtainable from mounting the real skins, because the latter do not retain their color, and their texture is susceptible to changes not encountered in mounting the skins of other kinds of animals. In some cases, the Walters process is used in preparing hairless parts of otherwise hairy animals—for example, the faces of monkeys—for use with the original skin of the body which is then mounted by the more conventional methods.



Osgood, Wilfred Hudson. 1938. "Narwhals, Small Whales Armed With Spears, Are Shown in New Exhibit." *Field Museum news* 9(11), 1-1.

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