

Seals of the Antarctic

Sally Cowan



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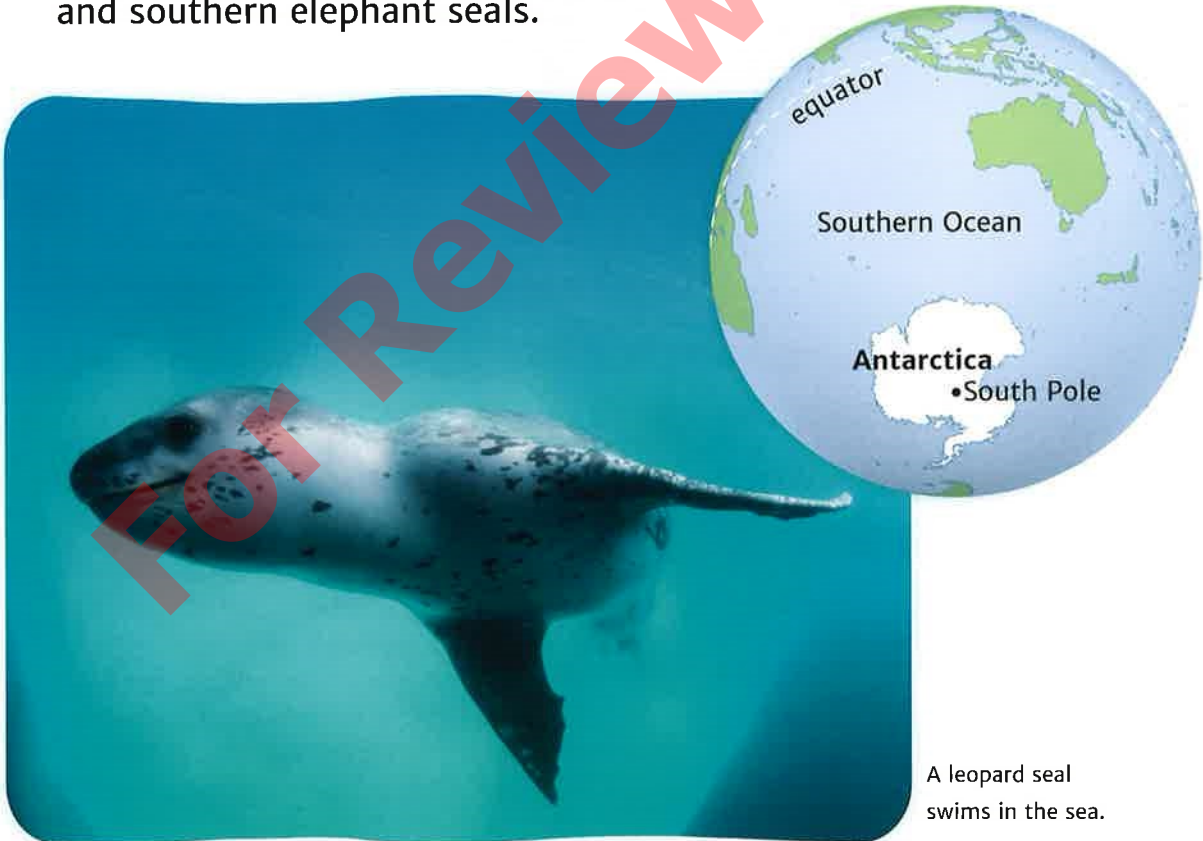
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Seals Living in the Antarctic

Seals are animals that live in the sea. There are many kinds of seals around the world. Several of them live in the **Antarctic**.

Four kinds of seals live on the ice and in the waters around Antarctica. They are crabeater seals, leopard seals, Ross seals and Weddell seals. Two other kinds of seals are found on islands in the Antarctic. They are fur seals and southern elephant seals.



A leopard seal swims in the sea.

Seals are excellent swimmers. They breathe air, so they have to swim up to the surface of the water to breathe. Seals also spend time on ice or land, where they rest and care for their **pups**.



Two crabeater seals rest on the ice.

What Seals Look Like

Seals have smooth heads and long, **sleek** bodies for gliding easily through the water.

Most seals are much fatter in the middle of their bodies. They have thick **blubber** that helps them keep warm in the water. They have fur on their bodies to give them extra warmth on land.

Fur seals do not have blubber. They have a thick coat of fur on their bodies to keep them warm.



a leopard seal



a crabeater seal

Seals have strong front flippers and smaller tail flippers. The flippers allow seals to swim fast and twist and turn underwater. Out of the water, most seals wriggle and drag themselves along the land. They also slide on the slippery ice.

Fur seals are different. They can walk on all four flippers on land.



A fur seal walks on all four of its flippers.

Most seals are grey or brown, with pale bellies. Weddell seals have dark patches, and leopard seals have black spots.

Seals have nostrils that close tightly to stop water getting in their noses. But they can open their mouths wide underwater to grab prey with their sharp teeth. Seals have large eyes to see well underwater. Their whiskers can sense movement in the water, which also helps them hunt for prey.

Most seals just have tiny holes for ears, but fur seals have ears with flaps to keep water out.



Fur seals have small flaps over their ears.

Seals can hear underwater and often call loudly to each other.

Many seals are between two and three metres long. Leopard seals are slightly larger. Male southern elephant seals are the largest seals in the world. They have long noses, which they can use to make roaring sounds.

Sizes of Antarctic Seals



fur seal 2 m



Ross seal 2.3 m



crabeater seal 2.5 m



Weddell seal 3 m



leopard seal 3.5 m



southern elephant seal (male) 6.5 m