

Assignments:

1. Read the text carefully.
2. Try to think of a suitable headline for each of the paragraphs below and write them above the paragraphs.

The Seal

The seal is a predator in the animal order and belongs to the family of the crawling seals. Although the seal is officially a predator, it does not have carnassial teeth. All food is swallowed without any chewing. The whiskers, which are used for orientation and detecting food in the murky water, are a striking trait of the seal. From grey to brown, patterned with rings or spots, the seal's fur can vary a great deal. Underneath their fur, seals have a special thick layer of fat, called blubber. The blubber prevents the seal from cooling too much and also serves as an energy reserve. Even though they do not have ear flaps, they do have ears, which are simply holes on both sides of the head. This is of great use for the seal, as it reduces the water resistance it encounters when swimming. Male seals (bulls) reach a length of 150 - 180cm and their weight can range anywhere from 55 - 170kg. The females' (cows) length varies from 120 - 170cm and their weight from 45 - 142kg. They can live to be up to 40 years old.

Seals live in the water and on land. When moving in the water by quickly waving their hind quarters sideways, their long feet with their wide webs function as fins. Seals can stay under water for up to 30 minutes and reach a water depth of up to 200m. On land, they are often assembled in big groups, but moving becomes a tedious task with their fins. Seals need flat and calm coastal waters where they can hunt fish, crabs and squids. At times, they can be found on ice or rocks and they only populate the northern hemisphere (e.g. Canada, South Japan, Germany



or Denmark). In Europe, approximately 50,000 seals live in the coastal waters of the North Sea. In the Wadden Sea, they have no natural enemies.



Although some seals travel distances of hundreds of kilometres every year in the search for food, they always return to the same spots where they grew up to give birth to their babies and to breed. The cows reach sexual maturity between the ages of 3 - 4 as opposed to the bulls, which become mature at the age of 5 - 6

years. Baby seals, which are also called pups, are born with the natural ability to swim, as tides would not give them enough time to learn.