

# You Asked???

By Mrs. Anand's Grade 7 students,  
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## Q: What do walrus use their tusks for?

**A:** Walrus are very eccentric and very interesting mammals of the Arctic Circle. One of their most puzzling features are their tusks. Their tusks are very useful, like their own little multi-purpose tool. One of the peculiar uses for their tusks is something called "ice walking." Walrus use their tusks as hooks and pull their massive weight up ice flows. They also use them as a defense system, for example, if any predator threatens their babies. They can also use them in mating to symbolize dominance between males.

The length of a walrus's tusk determines its place in the pack, and their tusks can grow anywhere from 36 centimetres to 100 centimetres. Very rarely will a walrus attack a fellow walrus, but if such an event occurs many scars and terrible injuries occur. Walrus, however, do have a tendency to be peaceful creatures. In conclusion, walrus tusks are the ultimate multi-tool for all the things it needs to do. -Tristan Hopkins

Walrus



## Q: Why is the beaver Canada's national animal?

**A:** The beaver has been associated with Canada since the 1600s when the fashion in Europe was to wear beaver-pelt hats. Since the price of these hats was so high and they were so popular, Hudson's Bay Company, a company involved in the beaver fur trade, honoured the animals by putting them in their coat of arms.

In later years, the beaver appeared with another Canadian symbol, the maple leaf, on the masthead of *Le Canadién*, a newspaper in Lower Canada. Even with all the fame, the beaver species came close to extinction by the mid 1800s, due to the high number of beavers being killed for the production of hats. Luckily at this time, European fashion turned to silk hats and the beaver population began to replenish.

On March 24, 1975, the beaver became an official symbol of Canada when an Act to make the beaver a symbol of the sovereignty of Canada was given Royal Assent.

-Adam Dotzert



A beaver is depicted on Canada's 5-cent coin.



Wolverine

## Q: How does a wolverine catch its prey?

**A:** Despite this fierce predator's name, nothing about the wolverine is remotely related to the wolf. Surprisingly, the smaller yet bulkier wolverine is much more resourceful than the wolf when it comes to hunting. The wolverine will rarely give up when it has spotted its prey. If it is an animal larger than itself, such as a deer, a wolverine will typically go into a tree above the animal and pounce on its back, digging its claws into the animal knocking it to the ground with its weight.

The wolverine will usually take more of a stealthy approach to hunting than other great Canadian predators. That might be because — believe or not — wolverines are members of the weasel family. Weasels tend to be a relatively shy species, and wolverines are no different. In fact some people have spent years in the Alaskan forest, where wolverines thrive, and have never seen one. Not many facts are known about the wolverine because of its rare appearance and because of its shyness. But this amazing creature will be known for years in books — especially in comics, if you know what I mean!

-Aidan Jones

## Q: Are there poisonous snakes native to Ontario?

**A:** There are, but only one, which is the *sistrurus catenatus*, commonly known as the eastern massasauga rattlesnake. It is mainly found in the southern parts of Canada, particularly near the Great Lakes, around Ontario and Manitoba.

The eastern massasauga rattlesnake has many names, including swamp rattler and the Michigan rattlesnake. Though highly venomous, it is rather small, with adults normally ranging from 45 centimetres to 75 centimetres long. It is recognizable by its colour pattern, which consists of grey or tan ground colour with rows of large rounded blotches down the centre of the back and on each side.

The poison the snake carries has special digestive enzymes, which disrupt blood flow and prevent blood clotting, usually causing the victim to die of blood loss. The snake moves rather sluggishly, but can strike rather quickly. If seen, just leave it alone and stay away from it. The snake is rather shy and won't attack unless provoked.

-Brian Shih