Polar Biology (2018) 41:1737–1750
https://doi.org/10.1007/s00300-018-2313-6

ORIGINAL PAPER

Assessing site-use and sources of disturbance at walrus haul-outs using monitoring cameras

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Received: 28 August 2017 / Revised: 11 March 2018 / Accepted: 16 March 2018 / Published online: 26 March 2018

Abstract
The rapid growth of tourism in Polar Regions stimulates a need for investigating potential impacts on targeted species and sensitive areas. This study examines effects of tourist visitations on haul-out dynamics and site use by walruses (*Odobenus rosmarus*) in Svalbard, Norway. Automated camera stations were established at five traditional haul-out sites that experience variable levels of tourist visitation. The cameras took one photograph each hour, throughout June–November from 2007 to 2015 (3 sites) and 2010–2015 (2 additional sites). A total of 66,365 images were analysed. The approximate number of walruses on shore, and % sea-ice cover was estimated for each image; additionally, the presence/absence of tourists, boats and polar bears (*Ursus maritimus*) were recorded. A log-linear regression model was run on residuals from an ARIMA model, fitted to each season of counts from each site. Use of the terrestrial haul-out sites was sometimes restricted by sea-ice cover, but walruses were also absent (or present rarely) at some sites, despite a lack of sea ice. Tourists on land and boats near the haul-out sites (with a single exception) did not disturb walrus haul-out behaviour significantly ($p > 0.05$) at any of the sites. In addition, most polar bear visits were not associated with detectable disturbances. However, polar bears did significantly disturb walrus herds at Andréetangen ($p = 0.003$) and Storøya ($p = 0.002$) in some years. These disturbances were likely associated with predation attempts on calves.

Keywords Arctic · Behaviour · Polar bears · Predation · Sea ice · Svalbard · Tourism

Introduction

Tourism in the Arctic has increased markedly in the past few decades. Tourists are drawn to the region to explore this relatively pristine environment and its unique wildlife (Hagen et al. 2012). The rapid growth of this industry in the North, including visitation to the Svalbard Archipelago (Norway), stimulates a need for knowledge of the potential effects tourism may have on targeted species and sensitive areas, such as walrus haul-out sites. Walruses are highly social animals that assemble on land or sea ice (i.e. haul out) in densely packed groups (Gjertz et al. 2001). Walruses exhibit a strong preference for sea ice as a haul-out platform, but during the summer months, when sea ice over shallow coastal feeding grounds is not available, they rest on shore at traditional sites (Gjertz et al. 2001). In Svalbard, many of these sites are experiencing increased exposure to human activities, particularly during the summer season, when they are being visited more frequently by marine cruise tourist expeditions (Pedersen et al. 2015). Cruise operators conduct small boat tours away from the ships and undertake tourist landings on shore, where guided groups disembark near walrus haul-out sites. Little is known about the potential effects of these visitations.

Walruses in Svalbard belong to a genetically distinct population that ranges across the northern Barents Sea, including the Svalbard and Franz Josef Land (Russia) archipelagos (Wiig et al. 1996; Andersen et al. 1998). Most of the males in this population summer in Svalbard, while most of the females and calves haul out in Franz Josef Land over the summer months. Although it is common in walruses for adult males, and adult females with calves or yearlings to haul out in different areas (Fay 1982), the extreme male

Electronic supplementary material The online version of this article (https://doi.org/10.1007/s00300-018-2313-6) contains supplementary material, which is available to authorized users.

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dominance seen currently in Svalbard is not typical for a population distributed over such a large area. Historically, females were much more common in the southeastern parts of Svalbard, prior to a period of extreme exploitation (Wiig et al. 2007). After almost 350 years of unregulated harvesting, walruses in Svalbard became protected in 1952, when they were almost extirpated (Born 1984); the population is currently recovering (Kovacs et al. 2014). In recent years, the total number of walruses and the number of mother–calf pairs have increased in Svalbard, and the animals have started to occupy haul-out sites in coastal areas that have not been used since the hunting period (Lydersen et al. 2008; Kovacs et al. 2014). The increasing presence of young animals in particular increases potential for disturbance, and disturbance-induced mortality. Hauled out walruses typically rush into the water when alarmed (Salter 1979), and thus, disturbances that cause the herd to panic may result in stampedes that can kill calves, yearlings and even adults. Demographic studies have shown that disturbance-related mortality can have negative impacts at the population level in walruses (Udevitz et al. 2013).

Disturbance of pinnipeds by tourist activities at haul-out areas has been documented for several species (Kovacs and Innes 1990; Cassini 2001; Orsini et al. 2006; Curtin et al. 2009; Granquist and Sigurjonsdottir 2014). However, these results may not necessarily be transferable to walruses, as animal behaviour varies greatly depending on species, location (hunted vs not hunted status), time of year and intensity of visitation (frequency, group sizes, tourist behaviour). Previous studies have addressed anthropogenic effects on walruses resting on land using aerial surveys and ground observations (Fay et al. 1986; Mansfield and St Aubin 1991). Although these results are useful, study designs based on in situ observations have small spatial and temporal resolutions, and thus provide limited information on disturbance in relation to natural dynamics in walrus haul-out behaviour. Automated camera systems have been used effectively to study haul-out behaviour of harbor seals (*Phoca vitulina*) in glacier inlets in Alaska (Blundell and Pendleton 2015a, b); this technique is very promising for providing undisturbed assessments of wildlife at logistically challenging sites.

Gilg et al. (2012) suggested that changes in behaviour, diets and ecological interactions, are expected short-term consequences of climate change on Arctic vertebrates. For walruses specifically, Kovacs et al. (2011) predicted that this species is likely to be affected by climate change through declines in Arctic benthic production and reductions in sea-ice breeding habitats over shallow, coastal feeding grounds. In addition, in terms of ecological interactions, it is likely that polar bears and walruses in Svalbard will interact more frequently in the future, as the retreating Arctic sea ice forces both these species to spend longer periods in coastal areas (Jay et al. 2012; Hamilton et al. 2017). Walruses rarely occur in the polar bear diet on Svalbard currently (Iverson et al. 2006).

In order to assess the potential effects of disturbance on walrus haul-out sites in Svalbard, this study investigated the temporal dynamics of walrus haul-out behaviour at traditional haul-out sites. Selected study sites had variable levels of tourist visitation, ranging from undisturbed sites to haul-outs that were visited almost daily during the summer months. Furthermore, the potential influences of the presence of polar bears and the availability of sea ice on haul-out dynamics were investigated.

Materials and methods

Study sites

Automated camera stations were established at five traditional, land-based walrus haul-out sites on Svalbard, Norway at Lågøya, Storøya, Kapp Lee, Andréetangen and Havmerra (Fig. 1). The sites were selected based on previous knowledge that they were commonly used by walruses during summer (Lydersen et al. 2008; Kovacs et al. 2014), and because they were exposed to varying levels of tourist visitations (Pedersen et al. 2015). Topography also played a role in site selection. Study sites were chosen where it was possible to cover most of the potential haul-out area in one image taken from stationary cameras. At each site, a SONY cyber shot compact camera was attached towards the top of a 5 m high aluminium mast. The cameras were enclosed in a modified PELI case for waterproofing and attached to an external battery source. Due to sporadic technical failures, a compact digital single-lens reflex camera with an 18–55 mm lens was added to each camera station in 2010. The backup cameras were connected to batteries charged by solar panels. Each camera took one image per hour throughout the sampling period, with an image resolution of 1–5 megabytes. Images were taken from June/July until October/November, depending on the date the cameras were deployed in a specific season and the battery life. The camera stations at Lågøya, Andréetangen and Havmerra were operative from 2007 to 2015, while the camera stations at Storøya and Kapp Lee were operative from 2010 to 2015 (see Table 1).

Photo-analyses and data collection

The total number of walruses hauled out on shore was estimated for each image. Due to the relatively low angle of view of the cameras and the tight clustering of the herds, it was often impossible to determine the exact number of animals. Thus, the number of walruses present was estimated and recorded in 12 numerical classes: (1) 0 walruses, (2) 1–10, (3) 11–20, (4) 21–30, (5) 31–40, (6) 41–50, (7)

Fig. 1 Map of Svalbard showing the location of the five automated walrus-monitoring camera stations; Andréetangen, Havmerra, Kapp Lee, Lågøya and Storøya in this study. Tourist traffic at each site is quantitatively represented by the size of the red circles, based on the average number of people on shore from 2007 to 2015

51–60, (8) 61–70, (9) 71–80, (10) 81–90, (11) 91–100 and (12) > 100.

In cases where animals hauled out far away from the camera, a zoom-in function was used to obtain a more accurate count. From June until early September, 24-h daylight prevailed and the sites could be observed throughout the day and night. When day–night cycling began in September, dark periods were recorded as not available (NA). In addition, when sporadically occurring battery failures resulted in series of missing images, and when the camera field of view was impaired by fog or snow on the lens, the period was classified as NA. In some cases, entire series of pictures were excluded from analysis because the field of view was zoomed too far in when the camera was set up, resulting in only a fraction of the beach being covered throughout the season. When the camera field view covered less than ~ 50% of the area where walruses normally were observed hauling out (based on observations made in photos from previous seasons covering the entire beach), the series of pictures were excluded.

In order to evaluate the availability of the haul-out sites to the walruses, the percentage of near-shore sea-ice cover (≤ 100 m from shore) was estimated in each image. In addition, the presence/absence of people, boats and polar bears on the images were recorded. Ships observed far away (> ~ 5 km) from the walrus haul-outs were not recorded, as these boats were unlikely to have effects on the animals.

Tourist-site visitation records, compiled by the Governor of Svalbard, were used to document the total number of people on shore at each haul-out site, each year. In addition, the dates when tourist visited the sites from 2008 to 2015 were obtained from post-visitation reports, which tourist operators must report to the Governor of Svalbard each year.

Data analyses

An Autoregressive Integrated Moving Average (ARIMA) model was fitted to counts obtained from each set of images (each site by year). The model was implemented with the 'arima' function from the R 'stats' package in R version

Table 1 Overview of the dates when the cameras were operative and the total number of images collected by camera stations placed at five different walrus haul-out sites in Svalbard

Location	Year	Dates	Pictures
Andréetangen	2007	13/07–11/10	1380
	2008	03/06–30/09	2865
	2009	F	0
	2010	09/06–04/10	2806
	2011	29/06–06/10	2373
	2012	05/07–11/09	1424
	2013	25/06–07/09	1614
	2014	13/07–05/11	2746
	2015	01/07–29/11	3632
Havmerra	2007	13/07–06/09	1207
	2008	03/06–30/09	3027
	2009	03/06–14/10	3194
	2010	09/06–12/10	2994
	2011	29/06–10/07	260
	2012	05/07–03/10	2157
	2013	09/07–04/10	2086
	2014	F	0
	2015	01/07–10/11	3192
Kapp Lee	2007	X	0
	2008	X	0
	2009	X	0
	2010	F	0
	2011	29/06–06/10	2373
	2012	F	0
	2013	25/06–05/10	2443
	2014	12/07–22/10	1708
	2015	F	0
Lågøya	2007	01/07–14/10	2335
	2008	20/06–07/10	2613
	2009	04/06–24/07	1206
	2010	11/06–11/10	2933
	2011	02/07–19/10	2607
	2012	F	0
	2013	27/06–15/10	2642
	2014	09/07–20/08	935
	2015	05/07–19/11	3312
Storøya	2007	X	0
	2008	X	0
	2009	X	0
	2010	08/07–29/09	1985
	2011	F	0
	2012	05/07–07/11	2997
	2013	F	0
	2014	11/07–28/11	2891
	2015	F	0

Twenty-eight sets of images (of a possible 39) were collected from 2007 to 2015

Images were missing from some years because the camera station was not operative (X) or due to technical camera failures (F)

3.2.5 (R Core Team 2016). Due to the large number of zeros, the count data were log $(x+1)$-transformed prior to analysis. The residuals were symmetrically distributed after transformation (Fig. 2a). Akaike's Information Criterion (AIC) was used for model selection, with a stepwise approach, resulting in a model fitted with the first-order auto-regression, first-order difference and a second-order moving average. These parameters did not produce the best fit for all of the series of counts, but they did produce the lowest, or second lowest, AIC scores for more datasets than models with more or less complex combinations of parameters.

The residuals from the ARIMA (1,1,2) model were assumed to appropriately represent the magnitude and direction of deviations from expected changes in numbers. Accordingly, changes in the number of walruses hauled out on shore between two time steps under non-disturbed conditions should be associated with small residuals. In contrast, abnormally rapid decreases and increases are expected to be associated with large, negative and positive residuals, respectively. Due to the high frequency of extremely small residuals (Fig. 2a), the walrus numbers were grouped into three numerical categories prior to analysis. The assignment of residuals to each category was based on the initial residual frequency distribution and the absolute change in walrus numbers associated with the residuals (Fig. 2a, b). The frequency distribution indicated that most residuals were distributed between ± 0.25. This interval (± 0.25) represents a deviation of -22 or 28% from the expected change in the number of walruses hauled out between two time steps (Fig. 2a). Residuals distributed from -1 to -0.25 (-63 to -22%) and from 0.25 to 1 (28 to 172%) were much less frequent, but still relatively frequent compared to the most extreme values recorded. Residuals distributed between $+1$ and -1 were sometimes associated with no change in walrus numbers (Fig. 2b). Accordingly, any deviations less than -1 (-63%) or greater than 1 (172%) were considered rare and extreme enough to represent an abnormal change in walrus numbers, and were deemed to be representative of a disturbance event. Residuals distributed between ± 1were classified as 0 (no disturbance), and the remaining negative and positive residuals were classified into negative and positive categories.

A log-linear regression model (Poisson distribution with a log-link) was implemented with the 'GLM' function from the R 'stats' package (R Core Team 2016) on residuals, distributed over the three categories. The model was used to test whether the distribution of residuals differed between the presence/absence of potential disturbance factors (tourists, boats or polar bears). A Likelihood Ratio Test (which has a Chi squared distribution under the null hypothesis of independence between disturbance and residual categories) was used to compare models (R Core Team 2016). The selected model included the interaction between year

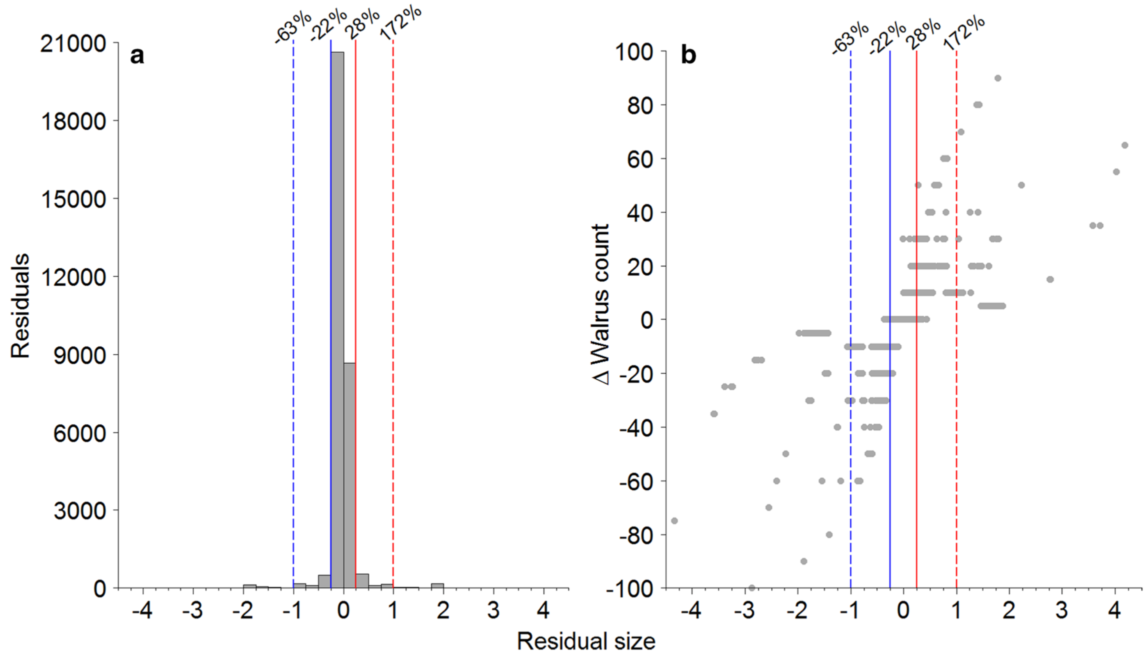

Fig. 2 **a** Distribution of residuals (as log proportions) calculated from the ARIMA model fitted to walrus counts from each year collected at Andréetangen, Havmerra, Kapp Lee, Lågøya and Storøya from 2007 to 2015. The vertical lines are labelled with percentages (converted from log proportions); $-1=-63\%$ (dashed blue), $-0.25=-22\%$ (solid blue), $0.25=28\%$ (solid red) and $1=172\%$ (dashed red). **b** Residual size associated with the observed magnitude and direction of the change in absolute walrus numbers (Δ Walrus count) between two time steps. Each vertical line corresponds to the lines and the associated residual sizes in **a**

of study (as factor) and presence/absence of potential disturbance factors, and the interaction between residual size (average = 0, positive or negative) and presence/absence of potential disturbance factors.

Data from the tourist post-visit reports were used to calculate the percentage of tourist landings reported vs visitations detected in the images taken by the camera stations, and vice versa.

Results

Twenty-eight sets of images (of a possible 39) were collected for the current study and 69,937 images were analysed (Table 1). Large deviations (residual size) in the change in walrus numbers between two time steps were rarely recorded; the norm was extremely small deviations (Fig. 2a). However, some abnormally rapid decreases (< −63%) and increases (> 172%) were recorded. The absolute deviations in walrus numbers associated with these abnormally large changes ranged from − 5 to − 100, and from 5 to 90 animals (Fig. 2 a). In general, once a walrus haul-out had been initiated at an empty beach, the number of animals increased gradually until it reached a turning point after which the number of animals hauled out began to decrease (see Fig. 3 for patterns at Andréetangen, also see Online Resource 1, ESM_1 for all other sites in Figs. 1–4). The temporal fluctuations in walrus numbers sometimes resulted in a site becoming completely abandoned, while at others times the number of animals started to increase again before numbers reached zero. These gradual increases and subsequent decreases in the number of walruses hauled out resulted in sporadically occurring peaks of varying sizes throughout the sampling period at each site. The longest periods with animals continuously present on shore at a site was 29 days at Andéetangen, 17 days at Lågøya, 5 days at Kapp Lee, 9 days at Havmerra and 4 days at Storøya.

No walruses were observed at Lågøya in 2009 or at Storøya in 2014. The shorelines at these two sites were covered by sea ice in the early part of the summer and intermittently thereafter during these years (Fig. 4). At Andréetangen in 2008 and 2010, and at Havmerra in 2007, 2008 and 2015, walruses began to haul out on shore soon after there was open water in front of the beaches. At Havmerra in 2010, 2012 and 2013, there was no near-shore sea ice for the majority of the sampling period. However, in 2010 and 2012, there were long periods with no animals hauled out, and in the rare cases when haul-out occurred, it only involved small groups (1–10). In contrast, haul-outs were frequent and often large (> 100) in 2013. In all recorded years at Andréetangen, walruses hauled out frequently and in large groups (> 100) from late June until the end of the

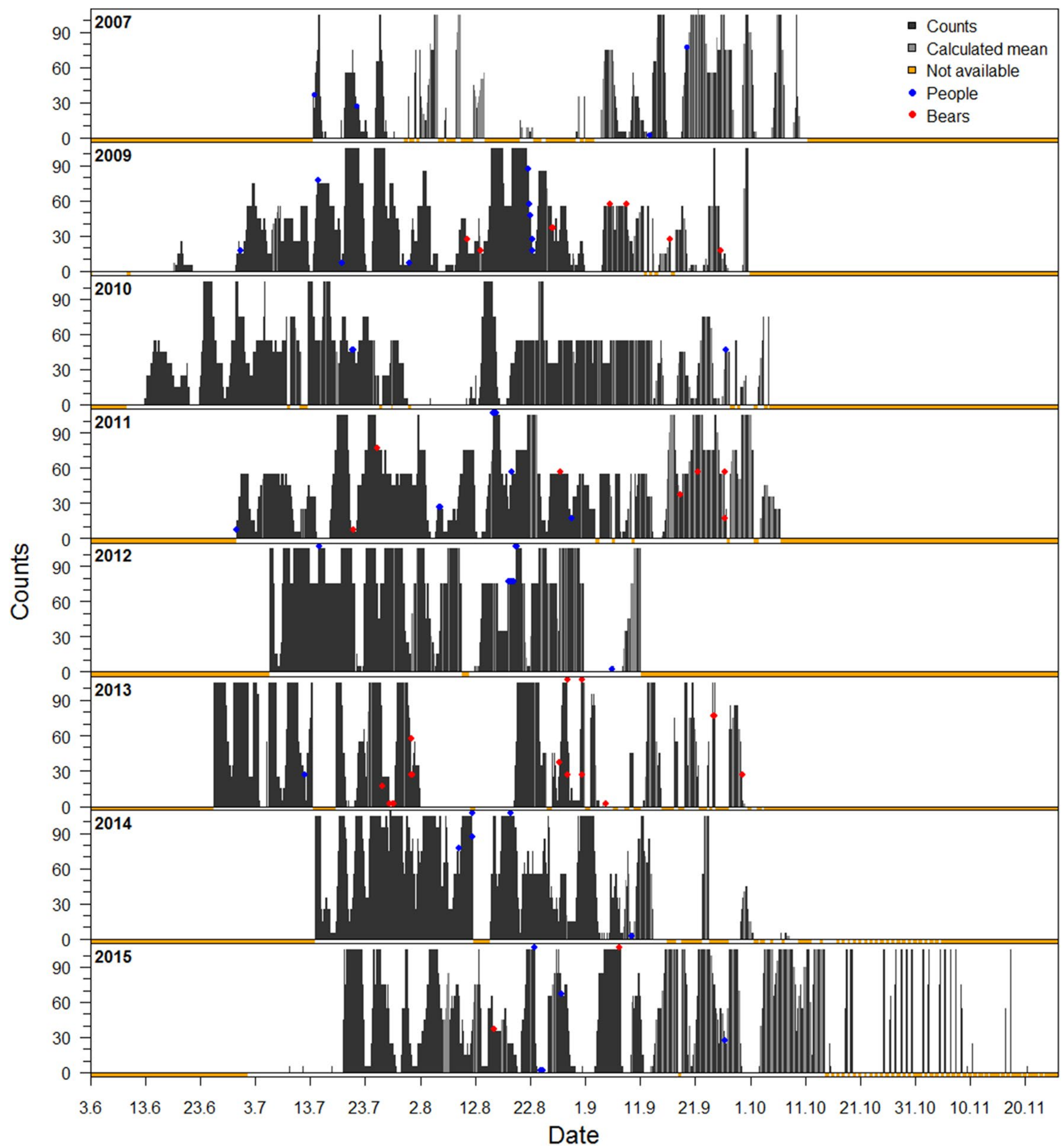

Fig. 3 Estimated number of walruses hauled out (black) at Andréetangen (2007–2015), from June to November. Note the sporadically occurring peaks, and the gradual increases and decreases in number of animals on shore. Missing values spanning 12 time steps or less (i.e. ≤½ day), are replaced by a mean value (grey). This mean is calculated as $N[t_1-1]+N[t_i+1]/2$, where 1 is the first missing value and *i* is the number of consecutive, missing values. Missing values spanning >12 time steps are plotted as NA (orange). The occurrences of people (blue) and polar bears (red) are illustrated by coloured circles on top of the bars

sampling period. Despite little sea-ice cover at Kapp Lee, animals were rarely present at this site and occurred only in low numbers when they did haul out.

According to tourist records provided by the Governor of Svalbard, Kapp Lee was the most visited site by tourists, with an average of >1000 people on shore each summer (Fig. 1). Lågøya was the second most visited site (500–1000), followed by Andéetangen (100–500), Storøya (1–100) and Havmerra (0) (Fig. 1). Similar relative levels of human traffic were observed in the images collected in the current study. The number of images where human presence was observed within a season ranged from 0 to 49 among the various sites. People were most frequently observed at Kapp Lee (Table 2), while people were never observed at Havmerra. On average, 46% of tourist landing dates recorded in post-visit reports corresponded with dates when people were observed on shore in images collected at the haul-out sites (see Online Resource 1, ESM_1 in Table 1). Moreover,

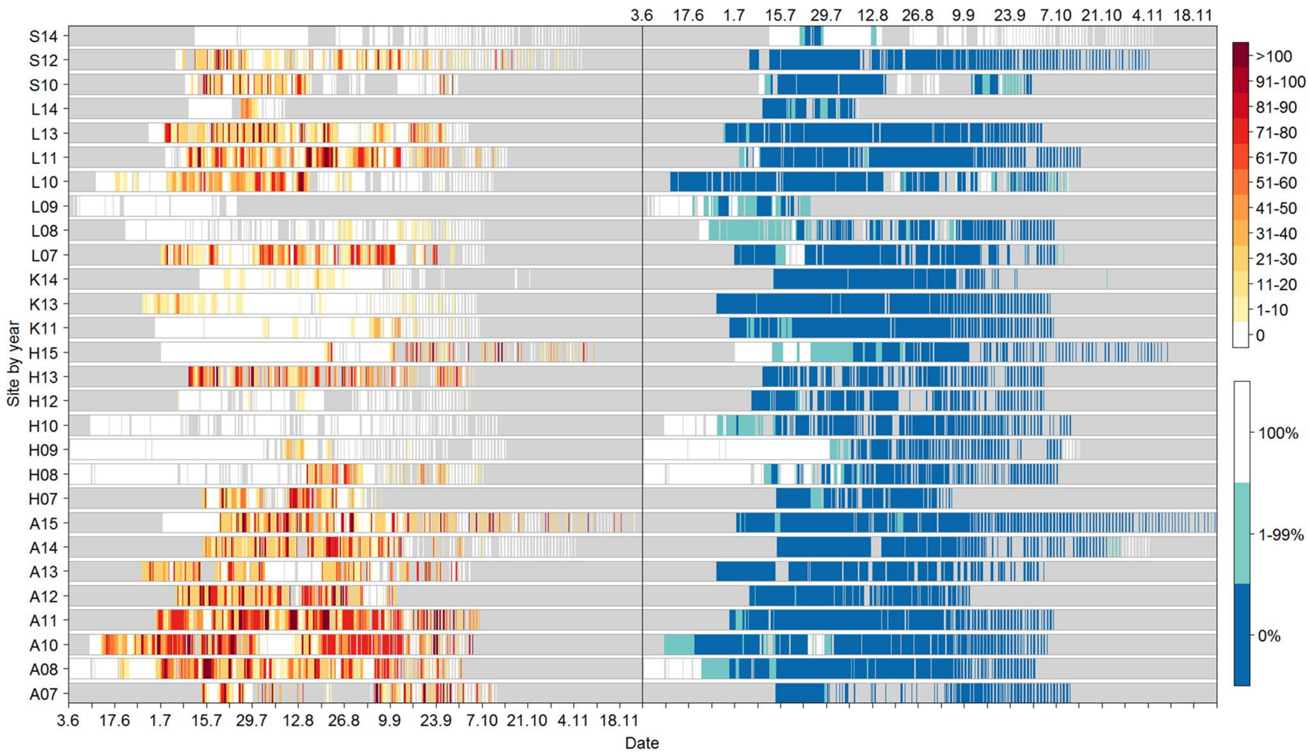

Fig. 4 Estimated number of walruses (left) hauled out from June to November at various walrus haul-out sites in Svalbard (*S* Storøya, *L* Lågøya, *K* Kapp Lee, *H* Havmerra, *A* Andréetangen) compared to percentage ice cover (right) of the shoreline. The two-digit number after each letter represents the year of data collection. Walrus numbers were estimated from images collected by camera stations placed at the haul-out sites, from 2007 to 2015

35% of days when people were observed in photos corresponded with days reported in post visit reports, on average.

Boats near the shoreline were observed most frequently at Andréetangen and Kapp Lee (Table 2). The total number of images where boats were observed ranged from 1 to 72 at Andréetangen and 11–21 at Kapp Lee among the sampling years. At Lågøya and Storøya, the total number of images where boats were observed ranged from 0 to 4 in a given year, whereas no boats were observed at Havmerra during the study period.

Storøya experienced the highest number of polar bear visits within a season, with > 100 images containing bears in both 2010 and 2012 (Table 2). However, no bears were observed at Storøya in 2014, when the walruses were absent and the shoreline was covered by sea ice throughout the majority of the sampling period. The number of images with polar bears were much lower at the other sites (Lågøya 0–22; Andréetangen 0–22; Havmerra 0–3; Kapp Lee 0–2).

Most tourist groups observed in the images remained at considerable distances (100 + m) from the walruses when animals were present on shore (Fig. 5a), but some small groups of people (not associated with official tourist cruise operators) were occasionally observed very close to the animals (Fig. 5b). Polar bears came close to hauled out walruses at all five sites, generally without causing obvious signs of disturbance (Fig. 5c). However, at sites where mother–calf pairs occurred, bears clearly induced panicked reactions in the herd, causing large and rapid decreases in the number of animals hauled out on shore (Fig. 5d). Walrus calves were commonly observed in the walrus herd at Storøya, with adults between them and nearby polar bears (Fig. 5e). At sites where mother–calf pairs occurred, small walruses were often located near or in the water when a polar bear was nearby, while large animals hauled out higher up on the beach remained on shore (Fig. 5f). Groups containing only large walruses were seemingly not disturbed by the presence of polar bears or zodiacs, even when they were occasionally quite close (Fig. 5g); such groups of animals also remained hauled out during periods with snowfall and windy conditions (Fig. 5h).

No significant effects of the presence of humans or boats were detected on the number of walruses hauled out at any of the sampled sites (for details see Online Resources ESM_1 in Tables 2 and 3). However, at Andréetangen ($p = 0.003$) and Storøya ($p = 0.002$), there were significant, negative effects associated with the presence of some polar bears (for statistical details see Online Resources ESM_1 in Table 4). Presence of polar bears in time t was associated

Table 2 Total number of images with people, boats and polar bears documented by automated camera stations placed at walrus haul-out sites at Andréetangen, Havmerra, Kapp Lee, Lågøya and Storøya over the period 2007 to 2015

Location	Year	People	Polar bears	Boats
Andréetangen	2007	4	0	1
	2008	12	8	8
	2010	12	0	4
	2011	4	7	16
	2012	15	1	13
	2013	22	20	1
	2014	4	0	72
	2015	6	2	21
Havmerra	2007	0	0	0
	2008	0	2	0
	2009	0	0	0
	2010	0	0	0
	2012	0	0	0
	2013	0	3	0
	2015	0	0	0
Kapp Lee	2011	34	0	21
	2013	46	2	11
	2014	49	1	12
Lågøya	2007	1	22	4
	2008	0	0	0
	2010	12	2	1
	2011	30	8	1
	2013	15	0	2
	2014	1	1	0
Storøya	2010	6	130	4
	2012	0	272	3
	2014	0	0	0

with residuals <-1 and >1 at Andréetangen in 2013, and at Storøya in 2010 and 2012 (Fig. 6). In these three seasons, the relative frequency of large negative residuals (<-1) was higher when bears were present, compared to when they were absent (Fig. 6). In a few cases, large positive residuals (>1) were associated with large increases in absolute walrus numbers (>60 animals). These events were associated with build-ups of walrus herds immediately following a polar bear disturbance. However, most polar bear observations were associated with small residuals, including most observations of bears during the three seasons where negative effects were documented. Moreover, residuals at time t were sometimes associated with bears observed at time $t-1$ or $t+1$, but not observed at time t (for more details see Online Resource 1, ESM_1 in Fig. 5). Large positive residuals were also associated with groups initiating a haul-out event at a previously empty beach, with animals arriving in large numbers once a "seed-point" was set. AIC scores for the best-fit models can be found in Online Resource 1 (ESM_1 in Table 5).

Discussion

Camera "traps" have been used for decades to capture the presence/absence of cryptic animals, but increasingly camera technology is being used to monitor wildlife behaviour (e.g. and potential sources of disturbance (Blundell and Pendleton 2015a, b; Guimarães Paiva et al. 2015; Fuglei et al. 2017)). This is the first study to use automated camera systems to monitor walrus haul-out dynamics at multiple terrestrial haul-out sites over multiple years. Strong temporal trends were detected in haul-out dynamics of walruses in Svalbard over the summer and fall, with gradual, or more rarely precipitous, increases and subsequent decreases in the number of animals on shore being the normal pattern. Similar temporal fluctuations in walrus numbers have been observed at terrestrial haul-out sites in the Canadian Arctic (Salter 1979; Miller and Boness 1983). It remains uncertain what factors drive these natural fluctuations in group size. Plane overflights, dogs and polar bear attacks are known disturbance factors that cause declines in the numbers of animals at haul-out sites (e.g. Salter 1979; Miller 1982; Efroymson and Suter 2001), but such disturbances are rare under normal circumstances.

The maximum number of sequential images where walruses were observed on shore varied between years and sites. Sometimes walruses were continuously hauled out only for a few hours or days, whereas at other times animals were observed on shore continuously for almost a month at a given site. It has previously been shown that walruses spend ~30% of their time hauled out (Born and Knutsen 1997), and that haul-out durations are longer during the summer months than at other times of year (Hamilton et al. 2015). The average terrestrial haul-out duration for individual adult male walruses in Svalbard ranges from ~20 h in August (Gjertz et al. 2001; Hamilton et al. 2015) to 16 h in September (Hamilton et al. 2015). Haul-out durations reported for male walruses in Svalbard during August and September are shorter than those reported for males in NE Greenland (38 h; Born and Knutsen 1997). The relatively short times spent on shore by individual animals in Svalbard suggests that there must be a continuous exchange of individuals hauling out during times when groups of animals are present on shore for long periods. Satellite relay data loggers attached to walruses have shown that individuals do move between different sites within a season (Lydersen et al. 2008), thus the total number of individuals visiting the sites monitored in the current study is likely higher than the maximum numbers estimated by the hourly images.

Walruses in Svalbard are generally absent from terrestrial haul-out sites when near-shore sea ice is available, with the exception of a few occasions when animals hauled out on the land-fast ice in the immediate area of a haul-out. At most sites, the walruses began to haul out on shore only when the ice disappeared and there was open water in front of the beaches. Despite having long periods with no onshore sea-ice cover, the walruses were almost completely absent at Havmerra in 2010 and 2012. This site was frequently used in previous and subsequent years. Havmerra is the only study site that had no tourist visitations at all during this study, so the absence of walruses at this site was not human disturbance related. There are many islands with suitable haul-out sites very close by, so the animals have many opportunities to haul out in this general area (without being detected by the camera stations). At Storøya, in 2014, when the shoreline was completely covered by ice throughout the majority of the season, no walruses were observed. They might have used ice outside of camera range in this area as haul-out platforms.

Previous studies have shown that weather parameters, such as wind speed, ambient temperature and wind chill, can affect haul-out behaviour in walruses (Born and Knutsen 1997; Hamilton et al. 2015; Jay et al. 2017), similar to other pinniped species (Born and Knutsen 1997; Carlens et al. 2006; Hamilton et al. 2014). However, several studies conducted on walruses in Svalbard have found that weather conditions in this region in summer do not impact haul-out behaviour of walruses (Lydersen et al. 2008; Hamilton et al. 2015), presumably because the weather is mild enough to represent no thermal challenge for the animals. In this study, even the most extreme snowy and windy conditions did not seem to affect haul-out behaviour (Fig. 5h) and accordingly, weather parameters were not specifically included in the analyses of haul-out dynamics.

The number of walruses hauled out in Svalbard in the summer months was not influenced significantly by the presence of people near the herds. However, on one occasion, a large rapid reduction in walrus numbers was associated with the presence of a zodiac at Storøya. This observation corresponds with reports from previous studies where walruses responded to motor-induced disturbance by retreating quickly into the water (Salter 1979), suggesting that improper approaches can result in disturbance. Despite the observed disturbance associated with this single zodiac incidence, no general effect of boats near the herds was detected in this study. According to guidelines provided by the Association of Arctic Expedition Cruise Operators (AECO), tourist groups should stay at least 30 m away from all-male walrus colonies and 150 m away from colonies containing females with calves (AECO 2017). These guidelines also state that visitors must disembark at least 300 m away from the haul-out site, and stay downwind from the animals. Although the temporal resolution of the current study was limited to one image each hour, observations of visitors at haul-out sites indicate that organised tour groups generally followed these recommended guidelines. However, other visitors from small, private boats sometimes exhibited behaviour that did not follow AECO guidelines. Despite the occurrence of close approaches to the animals by these visitors, no significant disturbance events were detected involving people. Direct, intentional interactions with walruses for the purposes of scientific studies does induce behaviour changes in walruses, with increased alertness and (limited) spatial dispersal in the herd taking place close to the disturbance site (e.g. Jay et al. 1998, pers. observations). However, walrus behaviour quickly returns to normal (avg. 40 min; Jay et al. 1998), suggesting that walruses are quite robust to infrequent disturbances of short duration. The high tolerance of humans by walruses in Svalbard might be related to their protected status. Given that the Svalbard population has been protected for over 65 years, walruses in the region have no experience with threats from human hunters.

Approximately half of the tourist landings reported in government post-visit reports were not detected in the photographic records at the study sites. Some landings may not have been caught on camera because the tourists landed for reasons other than visiting the walrus haul-outs (for example cultural sites at Andréetangen and Kapp Lee or rare bird nesting sites at Lågøya; Pedersen et al. 2015). Tourist groups might also have been missed because of the low temporal resolution of the sampling; coming and leaving again within a time interval in which no images were taken. However, considering the large number of observed visits, and their lack of detectable impacts on the walruses, these undetected landings were unlikely to have caused disturbance to the walrus herds. Many visitations to the walrus haul-out sites observed in this study were not reported to the Governor's office by tourist operators, suggesting that the majority of landings are conducted by people that are not associated with registered cruise-ship operators.

Walruses remained undisturbed during most polar bear visits in the current study. Previous studies have reported aggressive behaviours by adult walruses towards approaching bears, such as threatening roars and swinging tusks (Popov 1958 cited in Fay 1982; Ovsyanikov 1996). The majority of walruses summering in Svalbard are adult males, as most females and calves remain in Franz Josef Land during this period (Wiig et al. 1996; Andersen et al. 1998). Given their large bodies, long tusks and aggressive behaviour, it is likely that large male walruses have the capacity to fatally wound polar bears. There is no scientific documentation of such an event, though it is thought to occur (Kiliaan and Stirling 1978). The behavioural responses of all-male groups of walruses to the presence of bears suggests that polar bears are not perceived as a risk; bears are

usually ignored. However, in some years at Andréetangen and Storøya, the presence of polar bears was found to disturb the walrus herds significantly. The frequency of these disturbance events was likely underestimated, because bears were in some cases only observed before or after the walruses had retreated into the water, and not at the exact time

◂**Fig. 5** **a** Tourist group visiting a walrus haul-out site on Lågøya (18/10/2010) while remaining at a fixed distance to the hauled out walruses. **b** Group of people in close contact with the walrus haul-out group at Lågøya (13/07/2011). **c** Polar bears present at Kapp Lee (06/07/2013) without causing any apparent disturbance, and **d** a polar bear inducing disturbance of a walrus colony (> 100 animals), displacing some animals into the water at Storøya (23/07/2012). **e** Polar bear approaching walruses at Storøya (24/07/2010) with calves clearly visible within the herd (identified by their small heads and bodies combined with short tusks). **f** Polar bears apparently only disturbing walruses located on the lower parts of the beach at Storøya (13/08/2010), with calves present within the disturbed group. **g** Adult walruses at Storøya remaining on land despite the presence of a bear and zodiacs (12/08/2010), and **h** walruses hauled out on shore at Storøya despite windy and snowy weather conditions (27/09/12)

of the disturbance (time = *t*), so the effect of their presence could not be detected in the statistical analyses. According to a recent population survey of walruses in Svalbard, Andréetangen and Storøya were the only two haul-out sites, out of the five included in the current study, where mother–calf pairs occur (Kovacs et al. 2014). Close inspections of images from these two sites, especially Storøya, show that many individuals located on the lower part of the beach and in the shallows are small individuals, including calves. This spatial structuring by age and sex has also been documented at walrus haul-out sites elsewhere in the species range (e.g. Miller 1976; Miller and Boness 1983). The groups containing young animals at Andréetangen and Storøya were more easily scared into the water when bears were present compared to larger walruses hauled out further up on the beach. Unfortunately, the tight packing of walrus herds (especially those containing youngsters) and the angles of the cameras in combination, did not allow calves to be counted accurately in the images used in this study. Hence, it was not possible to incorporate sex-age composition into the analyses as a discrete variable. However, it does appear that the effect of polar bears at walrus haul-out sites does depend on the age–sex composition of the group. Bears do attempt to prey on walrus calves at some sites in Svalbard; success rates are unknown.

Polar bear attacks and predation attempts on walruses have been documented in many previous observational studies (Popov 1958 cited in Fay 1982; Calvert and Stirling 1990; Rugh 1993; Ovsyanikov 1996). Although most of these documented attacks were unsuccessful, polar bears do occasionally capture and kill walruses. Detailed descriptions of a polar bear killing a walrus calf in the Chukchi Sea were documented by Rugh (1993). Over a four-year period, Ovsyanikov (1996) reported 35 predation attempts by polar bears on walruses hauled out on shore. Two of the observed attacks were successful, and in both cases, it was calves that were killed. Although it appears that polar bears rarely pose a serious threat to adult walruses, bears have been observed successfully capturing and killing adults (e.g. Calvert and Stirling 1990). Moreover, indirect walrus mortality can be induced by polar bears when attempted hunts cause alarm responses in walrus herds and induce rapid retreats into the water (Ovsyanikov 1996). Such disturbances can result in stampedes, killing calves located on the lower parts of beaches. There has been speculation that some bears actually use this strategy to get access to walrus calf carcasses (Popov 1958 cited in Fay 1982). Dietary studies have confirmed that polar bears occasionally feed on walruses in some areas in the Canadian Arctic (Iverson et al. 2006; Galicia et al. 2016). Although dietary studies are unable to distinguish between polar bears scavenging or actively preying on walruses, they provide indications of ecological interactions. For example, Galicia et al. (2016) found that walrus consumption was higher and more frequent in adult male polar bears compared to females. Based on these findings, they argued that walruses were actively hunted rather than scavenged, considering that adult male bears may be twice the size of females (Derocher et al. 2005, 2010), and thus more capable of attacking large prey such as walruses. Previous studies on polar bear diet in Svalbard have not found traces of walruses (Derocher et al. 2002; Iversen et al. 2013), suggesting that walruses are not common prey for bears in this area.

Occasionally, rapid decreases in the number of walruses hauled out on shore were documented in the current study without the presence of any apparent disturbing factors. Similar observations were made by Calvert and Stirling (1990), who reported that walruses sometimes rushed into the water when no obvious source of disturbance was present. On some rare occasions, rapid increases in walrus numbers were also detected, with the most extreme cases being recorded at Andréetangen and Storøya. These extreme, rapid increases in the number of animals on shore sometimes occurred shortly after events with large reductions in numbers, some of which were polar bear related. Popov (1960 cited in Fay 1982) reported similar patterns, where adult male walruses abandoned haul-outs due to polar bear disturbances, but quickly returned to the same place after the bears left.

Some rapid increases detected in this study occurred in connection with establishment of a haul-out at a previously empty beach. In these cases, the site was often visited repeatedly by one or a few individuals who remained in the water over extended periods without occupying the beach. Eventually, when an individual came ashore, it induced a rapid build-up of numbers resulting in a large group. These observed patterns suggest that many individuals were present in the water close-by, and all that was needed was one or a few individuals to initiate the haul-out.

The Barents Sea region, where the Svalbard-Franz Josef Land population of walruses occur, has experienced the most extreme losses of summer sea ice in the entire Arctic (Laidre et al. 2015). The duration of the ice-free period has increased with more than 20 weeks between

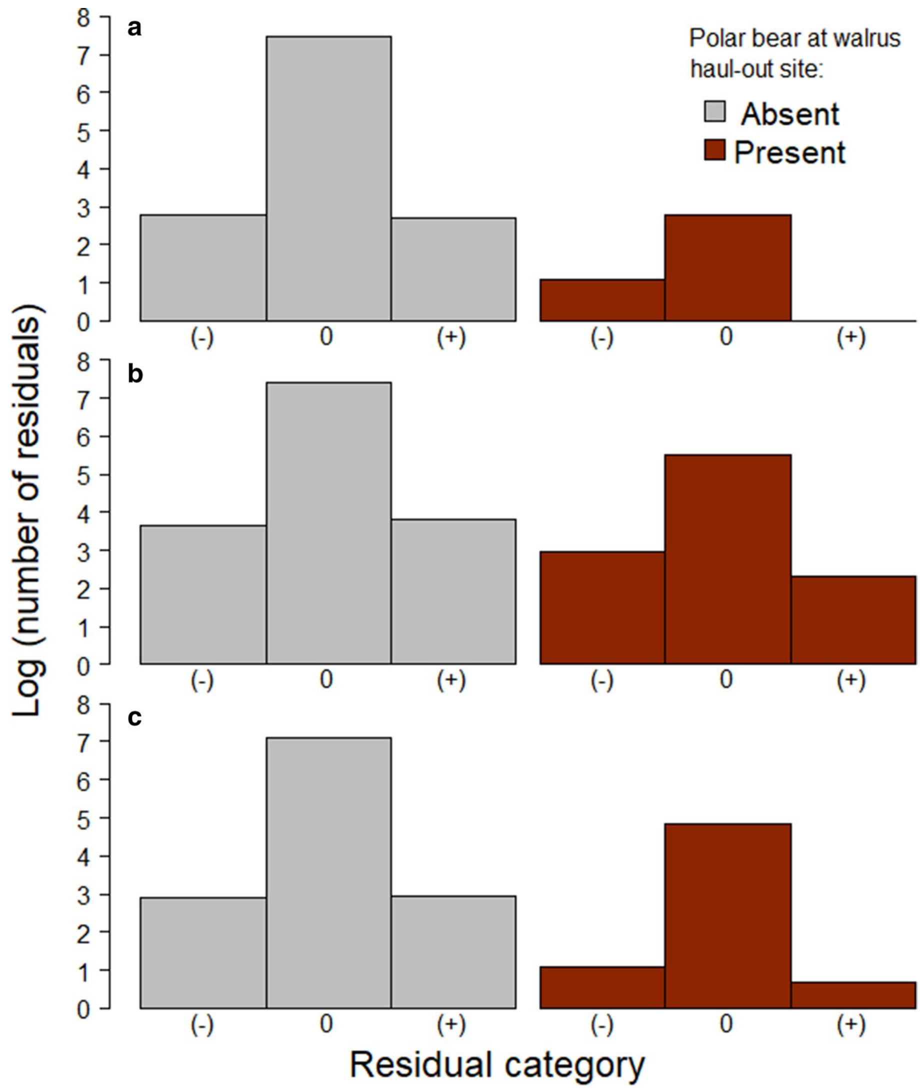

Fig. 6 Frequency distributions (on the log scale) of residuals associated with the absence (grey) and the presence (red) of polar bears at **a** Andréetangen 2013, **b** Storøya 2012 and **c** Storøya 2010, with the residuals grouped into three categories; ≤ − 1 (−), − 1 to 1 (0) and ≥ 1 (+). The distributions show that polar bear presence was generally associated with small residuals (0), i.e. little influence on the change in walrus numbers between two time steps. However, there is a shift from equally frequent negative and positive residuals when bears are absent to relatively more frequent negative residuals when bears are present in these three seasons of walrus counts

1979 and 2013 (Laidre et al. 2015). It has been shown in other Arctic regions that space use and foraging patterns in walruses is strongly dependent on sea ice (Beatty et al. 2016), and that animals are forced to spend more time feeding in nearshore areas in years with little sea ice over the continental shelf (Jay et al. 2012). As sea ice continues to retreat, similar changes are expected for walruses in Svalbard. In addition, recent studies have shown that polar bears in Svalbard are forced to search for food on shore as their access to sea ice and ice-associated prey have declined (Hamilton et al. 2017). The increasing association of both walruses and polar bears with land will almost certainly cause greater temporal and spatial overlap of these two species in Svalbard. This overlap creates a situation with increasing potential for polar bear predation on walruses in the future; the increasing presence of females with calves in Svalbard as the population becomes reestablished (Kovacs et al. 2014) in the region is notable in this context.

Conclusions

Human visitation at walrus sites in Svalbard did not cause disturbance effects. However, polar bears did occasionally induce large disturbances of walrus herds at terrestrial haul-out sites. These disturbances are likely associated with predation attempts on younger animals, although no kills were documented in this study. Increasing numbers of walrus calves at terrestrial haul-out sites in Svalbard along with the increasing population size (Kovacs et al. 2014), and the increasing presence of bears on shore during the ice-free season (Hamilton et al. 2017) in combination are likely to result in increased walrus–polar bear confrontations in the future. Despite the fact that no disturbance effects were documented as a result of visiting tourists, maintenance of the current recommendations for how tourists should behave near walrus haul-out sites is encouraged. It is especially important to keep a safe distance away from haul-out groups containing females and calves, in order to minimise the risk of stampedes. Walruses across the Arctic are facing a variety of climate-related challenges (Kovacs et al. 2011), so tourist-associated disturbances should be avoided to minimise the risk of cumulative impacts on these animals.

Acknowledgements This study was financed by the Norwegian Polar Institute. We thank everyone who has contributed to maintaining the camera stations, including Jon Aars, Jens Abild, Vidar Bakken, Kristen Fossan, Rupert Krapp, Anders Skoglund, Harald Steen and Hallvard Strøm. We are also grateful for the valuable contributions made to the study by the Governor's Office in Svalbard who provided the tourist records and post-visitation site data.

Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors of this research have no conflict of interests.

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