

Polar Bear



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Despite their cute, cuddly looks, polar bears are ferocious hunters. Polar bears live in the Arctic, and have a number of adaptations that enable them to survive in this cold environment.

Marine Mammals

The scientific name for a polar bear is *Ursus Maritimus*, which means 'sea bear'. Polar bears are the only species of bear considered to be a marine mammal. This is because they spend much of their time in or around water. Polar bears are excellent swimmers and divers.

Adapted For Cold Weather

Polar bears evolved from brown bears 5 million years ago. Over time, they adapted to live in a cold, icy habitat.

Polar bears have the thickest fur of any bear, with a dense undercoat beneath the top layer of hair.

The polar bear's thick coat prevents heat loss and keeps it warm.

Underneath its fur, a polar bear has dark skin (to absorb heat) and a thick layer of fat. This layer of fat protects the polar bear when it is swimming in cold water.

The polar bear has very large paws, which measure up to 12 inches (31 cm) across. They help spread the bear's weight when it is walking on thin ice. The large paws also help the polar bear to swim.

A Very Good Nose

Polar bears have a good sense of smell, which they use to hunt in harsh conditions. They can sniff out a seal from 1 kilometre away! Their sense of smell is much better than their hearing and sight, which are similar to those of humans.

How Big Is A Polar Bear?

Polar bears are big animals. In fact, they are the largest members of the bear family. An adult male polar bear weighs between 770 – 1200 pounds, and females weigh between 330 – 650 pounds.

Where Do Polar Bears Live?

Polar bears live in the Arctic – the cold, northernmost region of the Earth. Polar bears are found in Arctic regions of America (in the state of Alaska), Russia, Canada, Greenland and Norway.

What Do Polar Bears Eat?

Polar bears are at the top of the Arctic food chain. They have a varied diet which includes mammals, birds and crustaceans. One of the polar bear's favourite foods is seal.

Polar bears have sharp claws that allow them to catch and hold on to their prey. They often travel large distances to find food.

How Fast Can A Polar Bear Run?

A polar bear can run up to 40 kilometres an hour. However, when they are not hunting, polar bears usually save energy by walking at a slow pace instead – just 5 to 6 kilometres an hour.

Do Polar Bears Hibernate?

Polar bears do not hibernate. Although females live in a snow den for three months to give birth and raise their cubs, they are not actually hibernating.

How Do Polar Bears Communicate With Each Other?

Polar bears can communicate with each other using body language. They wag their heads from side to side when they want to play. When asking for something such as food, they will greet each other with nose to nose contact. Polar bears will growl if they feel threatened or angry.

Are Polar Bears Endangered?

Polar bears are presently classified as 'vulnerable'. This means that although they are not immediately endangered, they still need to be protected.

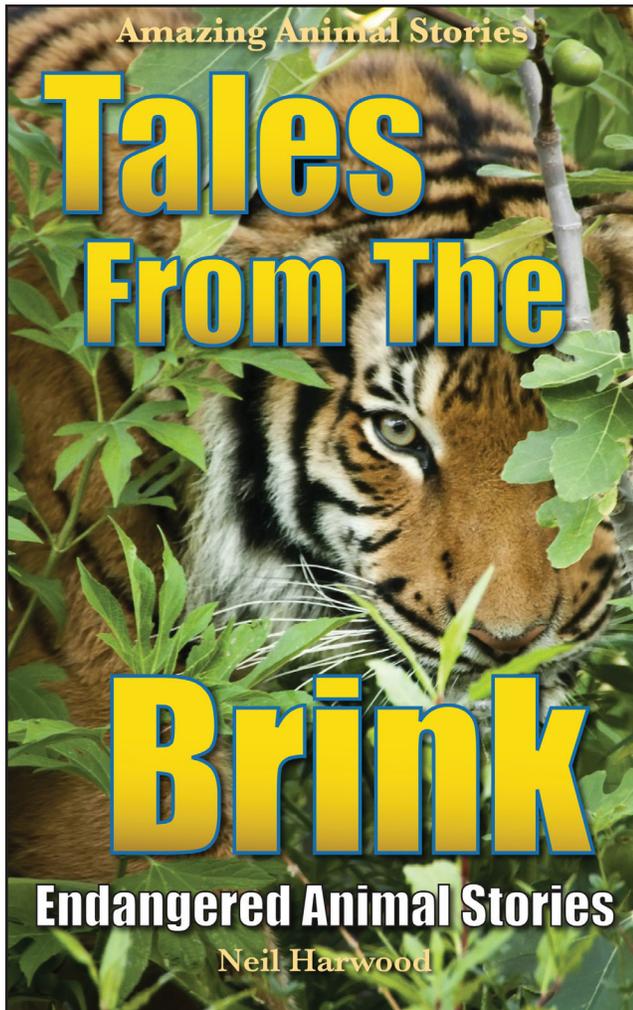
The biggest threat to polar bears is climate change. As the Earth gets warmer, more and more of the Arctic ice melts. Polar bears need the ice to hunt seals, so less ice means less food.

10 Polar Bear Facts

- *Polar bears can swim up to 100 miles (161 km) at a time.*
- *Polar bears can live up to 25 years in the wild.*
- *A baby polar bear is called a cub. When they are born, polar bear cubs weigh just 1 pound.*
- *The surface of a polar bear's paws are rough to help stop it slipping on the ice.*
- *Polar bears have small ears to conserve heat.*
- *Polar bears clean themselves by rolling around in snow.*
- *Polar bears have 42 teeth.*
- *Even though they live in very cold conditions, polar bears can overheat because of their thick fur.*
- *As well as seals, polar bears will eat walruses, whales, birds and even reindeer.*
- *Polar bears are the largest carnivores that live on land!*

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