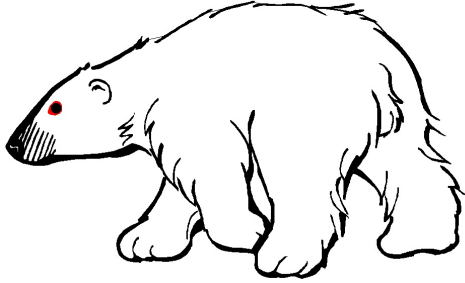


# POLAR BEARS



By Christine Ajayi



There are about 10,000 polar bears left roaming the icy polar regions in Norway, Greenland, Canada, Russia and the United States. They migrate in search of food, sometimes traveling as far as seventy-five miles in a single day.

Polar bears are born during the winter in a snug den that protects them from the snow. They have almost no fur at birth and their eyes and ears are sealed shut for the first six weeks. At birth, they weigh little more than a pound, but by early spring they have gained twenty-five or thirty pounds from their mother's rich milk and have grown full coats. Polar bear cubs remain with their mothers for one and a half to two years. Once they are full grown, they will weigh as much as seven hundred pounds.

Some polar bears remain active during the winter, hunting and traveling. If the temperatures become extremely cold, they may seek shelter in a cave or under an ice ledge. Females or sows who are pregnant will snuggle down in a cave for the long winter by October or November and will remain there with their babies until March or April.

The polar bear's white fur keeps it warm in the Arctic's harsh weather and also camouflages it against the snow and ice. Fur is dense with long guard hairs that trap a layer of warm air and an inner layer of fur keeps the skin from getting wet. Unlike other bears, polar bears also have hair on the bottom of their feet. It not only keeps them warm, but also prevents them from slipping on the ice. A second, thinner eyelid helps protect the polar bear's eyes from the brightness.

Polar bears love to swim so much that many scientists classify them as marine mammals. They are able to float for long periods at a time because of a heavy layer of body fat and can swim great distances without tiring. It is not uncommon to see polar bears swimming a hundred miles from the nearest land.

Polar bears are solitary animals. Adults only come together to breed and cubs stay with their mother's until they are mature enough to hunt and care for themselves. After mating the male, called a boar, and the female, called a sow, part and probably never meet again. There is only one other occasion that brings polar

bears together. When a whale, walrus or large seal dies and washes ashore, polar bears flock to feast on the carrion.

The favorite meal of a polar bear is seal and the fur on the bottom of their feet allows them to quietly approach an unsuspecting seal. A polar bear may wait for hours at a spot for a seal to come up for air, then pounce on it like a cat. The seal is killed instantly. Polar bears stuff themselves with seal blubber, only eating the flesh in hard times. Usually, the bear leaves the remainder of the carcass for Arctic foxes to feast on. Foxes are often seen following polar bears, expecting an easy dinner. With a full belly, grown polar bears can be seen frolicking about, turning somersaults, prancing on the ice and even sliding its rump down icy slopes.

**Answer the following questions in complete sentences:**

Why do Arctic foxes like to follow polar bears?

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How do adult bears behave after they have gotten their fill of meat?

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Where and when are baby polar bears born?

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Where can you find polar bears?

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How much does an adult polar bear weigh?

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Find the list of words relating to polar bears in the puzzle.

D	R	E	L	J	U	V	Q	D	E	F	K
D	M	A	M	M	A	L	H	I	O	E	S
J	K	P	L	W	T	C	Q	A	X	Z	Y
J	P	C	S	E	V	A	C	R	M	S	W
P	I	U	F	W	E	T	A	R	G	I	M
W	A	S	I	Y	I	K	N	M	D	E	C
L	O	Y	S	T	R	M	E	C	T	N	I
Y	R	R	H	W	C	H	M	A	K	M	T
R	W	E	I	C	Y	M	N	I	O	H	C
A	K	N	N	V	C	R	B	S	N	Z	R
T	Y	U	G	C	E	Z	N	Y	K	G	A
I	K	K	T	B	F	R	O	L	I	C	R
L	E	Q	I	W	A	C	H	I	M	R	D
O	I	H	K	D	R	J	T	H	I	C	E
S	W	L	J	H	J	J	T	I	E	X	I

arctic  
caves  
fishing  
frolic  
hibernate  
mammal

migrate  
solitary  
swimming



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