

Polar Bear

COOL FACTS:

Canada is home to two thirds of the global Polar Bear population and global warming is causing the loss of arctic sea ice and threatening this species.

Scientific name:	Ursus maritimus
Average height:	2-3 metres tall
Average weight:	males 400 - 500 kg females about half that 200-300 kg
Lifespan:	20-25 years- Classified as Special Concern in 2011.



PHYSIOLOGY

A Polar Bear's fur is thick, composed of a dense underfur and an outer layer of guard hairs that appear white but are really transparent. These hairs help trap the sun's heat to help keep the bears warm. Their skin is black and they have a layer of blubber beneath it that helps with insulation and buoyancy. They have fur and small bumps called papillae on their feet to keep them from slipping on ice. Their fur is oily, which helps make it waterproof. Their long neck, narrow skull and large flat front feet make them excellent swimmers. They have 42 teeth and an excellent sense of smell and can sniff out a seal a mile away.

HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

Polar Bears are the largest land carnivores and live mainly within the Arctic Circle. They spend most of their time on sea ice and feed mostly on seals but also eat walrus, beluga whales and bird eggs and will often travel miles in search of food.

Polar Bears mate late March to May and average 1 to 2 cubs in November- January. They dig a cave in a snow bank to use as a den. The cubs will stay with their mother for about two years. They communicate with bellows, roars, growls, chuff and purrs. Polar Bears do not hibernate but during the summer months they live off fat reserves as sea ice is not available for hunting grounds.



MORE COOL FACTS:

- The toonie has an image of a Polar Bear.
- In Norway and Denmark the Polar Bear is called isbjorn- the ice bear.
- Polar Bears have been used in advertising for years? Coca-Cola anyone?
- They can hold their breath for about 2 min and swim under water with their eyes open.