



# POLAR BEAR

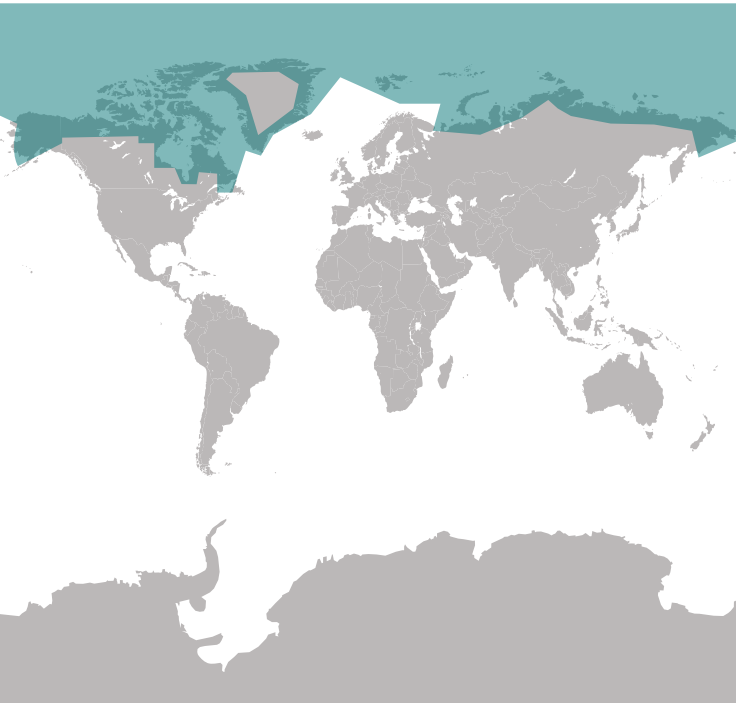


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The polar bear is the largest living land carnivore. They're instantly recognisable from the distinctive white colour of their thick fur. Read on to discover more interesting facts about them.

## Where they live

Polar bears live in the Arctic on land and ice-covered waters. They can be found in five countries: the United States (Alaska), Canada, Russia, Greenland and Norway. [www.wwf.org.uk/wildlife/polar\\_bear/](http://www.wwf.org.uk/wildlife/polar_bear/)



## CHARACTERISTICS

- Their claws act like ice-picks, and the soles of their feet act like suction cups so they can easily walk on ice.
- They can grow up to 3 metres in length.
- Males are much bigger than females - weighing 300-650kg, but can weigh up to 800kg.
- Strong swimmers, they spend most of their life around water.
- They may be big, but they're also fast. They stalk their prey moving low and slow, camouflaged by the ice then they charge at speeds of up to 30mph!

## DID YOU KNOW

**Pregnant female polar bears don't eat for up to eight months - while they give birth and nurse their young.**

## FAMILY

Female polar bears give birth in snow dens to a litter of cubs (twins are common). The mother will nurse and care for the cubs for two and half years until they are independent, during this time she will wait and not have any more cubs. Adult males live alone throughout the year.



**VIDEO**  
Watch footage:

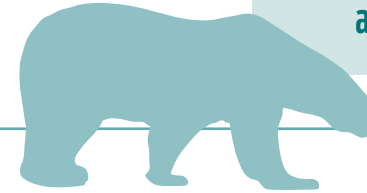
- [arkive.org/polar-bear/ursus-maritimus/video-00.html](http://arkive.org/polar-bear/ursus-maritimus/video-00.html)
- [arkive.org/polar-bear/ursus-maritimus/video-08d.html](http://arkive.org/polar-bear/ursus-maritimus/video-08d.html)

## FEEDING

- They are the top predator in their food chain.
- Their main food source is seals, but they will also feed on walruses, beluga whales and seabirds.
- They make use of the direction of the wind to conceal their scent from prey.

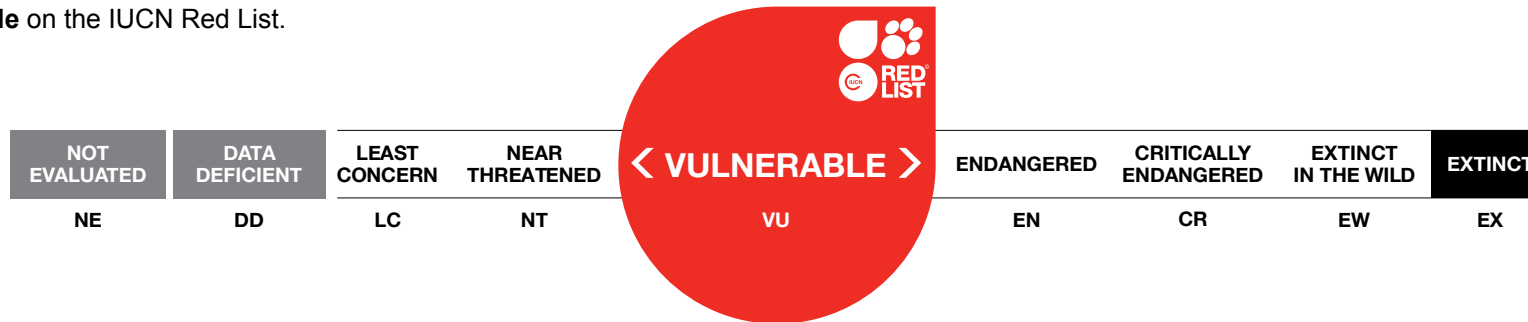
## DID YOU KNOW

Polar bears have an incredible sense of smell; they're able to detect prey nearly a kilometre away and up to a metre under snow.

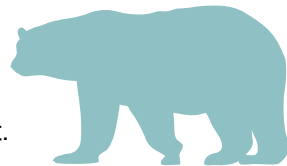


## CLASSIFICATION

Classified as **Vulnerable** on the IUCN Red List.



## STATUS



- Climate change threatens their habitat.
- The Arctic is warming up, causing the sea ice they depend on to hunt and breed, to melt away.
- The number of their species remaining in the wild is estimated to be between 22,000-31,000.

- Loss of sea-ice also threatens their main prey, seals, which depend on sea-ice to raise their young and rest. Hungry polar bears sometimes enter towns and villages to find food. Encounters between bears and people can be dangerous and even deadly - to people or to the bears. Other threats to the species include illegal hunting, pollution and disturbances from industrial activities.