



EXPLORE!

Our free poster resource for youth groups and young people is designed to get you thinking about one of WWF's key species. This issue focuses on the polar bear and looks at some fascinating facts, where they live, the threats they face and what you can do to help safeguard their future. What's more, all group members that take part in the activities and become an expert, can earn a special 'polar bear' badge.

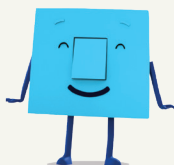


© NATUREPL.COM / STEVEN KAZLOWSKI / WWF

CALLING BUDDING GREEN CHAMPIONS!

Green Ambassadors 4 Youth – GA4Youth – is a fantastic badge programme to help 5-14s take the lead on green issues in their groups and their community. Our friendly Green Ambassador team – Leafy, Wheel, Switch, Crush, Smith and Tap – will help them get informed, get involved and get sharing on six topical green issues. Designed with the help of over 100 leaders, it offers six themed activity sets, a suite of posters to help you plan your green journey, and a badge scheme to reward young people for their achievements.

Sign up at wwf.org.uk/greenambassadors4youth



All our resources are accompanied by a badge.
Find out more at wwf.org.uk/ygresources

DID YOU KNOW?



Polar bears have large paws - up to 30cm wide - which they use like paddles to help them swim.



They are the largest terrestrial carnivore in the world.



Their fur appears white or yellowish, but hairs are actually translucent.



Polar bears can run faster than the world's fastest human - Usain Bolt - but thankfully for us they're more long distance wanderers than sprinters.



There are around 22,000-31,000 polar bears in the wild and they are classified as vulnerable on the IUCN RedList.



© TERRY DOMICO / WWF

POLAR BEARS

- perfectly adapted to a freezing life

The magnificent polar bear depends on Arctic sea ice to hunt seals, travel around their range and find mates to

breed. But the ice is shrinking.

By 2050, polar bear numbers may decline by 30% due to the rapid loss of sea ice. By helping protect polar bears you're helping to make sure the Arctic food chain stays healthy – for the benefit of wildlife and people in and beyond the Arctic.

SIZE

Males are 2.5-3 metres long and have a shoulder height of up to 1.7m. Males are twice the size of females - weighing 300-650kg, but can weigh up to 800kg

SWIM

Polar bears can swim for long distances and steadily for many hours to get from one piece of ice to another.

FEET

Polar bears have more hair on the bottom of their paws than any other bear. These furry foot pads may increase their grip on slippery sea ice and also help keep their feet warm.

DIET AND HUNTING

As top predators in the Arctic food chain, polar bears' main prey are ringed seals and bearded seals. They also eat harp and hooded seals and will scavenge on whale carcasses. When this is not available, they will eat small mammals, birds, eggs and vegetation.

On average a polar bear requires around 45 ringed seals per year to survive and are superb hunters, which is vital for surviving in such freezing conditions.

They can smell seals under a metre of compacted snow and from almost a kilometre away. Polar bears can break into their dens to catch the pups, they are fantastic at waiting by breathing holes or at the edge of water. They can also stalk seals that are basking on the ice.

Many polar bears living in the south of their range feed extensively on the sea ice during spring and early summer before it melts. Then they fast for around four months whilst on shore, until the sea ice refreezes and they can resume hunting again.

HABITAT

Polar bears are found in the Arctic landscapes of Canada, Greenland, Svalbard, Russia and Alaska, and spend most of the time on, or near the edge of the Arctic sea ice - the best place for hunting.

THREATS

Climate change: Today, climate change is the most serious threat to polar bears. The Arctic is warming roughly twice as fast as the global average, causing the ice that polar bears depend on to melt away.

The sea ice is melting earlier and forming later each year. Polar bears need the sea ice to hunt their main prey – seals. The reduction in sea ice means some bears are having to fast for longer – affecting their survival and breeding success.

Pollution: The polar bears are exposed to high levels of pollutants through their food. The Arctic food chain contains high levels of some toxic chemicals. Offshore operations pose the greatest risk, since routine emissions, spills or leaks will be discharged directly into the sea or on the sea ice. Contact with oil spills can reduce the insulating effect of the bears' fur. The bear must then use more energy to keep warm and compensate by increasing its caloric intake—which may be difficult. Polar bears can ingest oil through grooming and through eating contaminated prey. The ingested oil can cause liver and kidney damage, and has long-term toxicity.



© PETER EWINS / WWF-CANADA

BREEDING

Female polar bears first give birth when they're around the ages of 4 or 5 – males take longer to mature and usually begin attempts around the age of 5 or 6, although their prime breeding years begin around 10. As solitary animals with a vast territory range, finding a mate is an all-consuming occupation during the March to June breeding season. Females retreat to a den in the Autumn and give birth and nurse the cubs during the winter. Cubs are tiny at birth, weighing around 600g, five times less than the average healthy human baby, but the mother's fatty milk helps them gain weight quickly and they develop their fur and teeth in time to emerge from the den in March or April. The mother needs to regain weight fast by hunting in order to keep producing that all-important milk.



© STAFFAN WIDSTRAND / WWF

© NATUREPL.COM / ANDY ROUSE / WWF-CANON

© NATUREPL.COM / ANDY ROUSE / WWF-CANON

ACTIVITIES

POLAR BEAR 40:40

You can play this anywhere there's a bit of space – ideally the playground or park. One person is the polar bear – everyone else is a seal. "Home" is an imaginary breathing hole in the sea ice which the seals are trying to get to but the bear is guarding. The polar bear can only spend 10 seconds at "home" before having to leave to hunt elsewhere, which means some of those brave seals might just make it.

20 QUESTIONS

The group stand at the back of the hall and the leader calls out questions relating to sustainable behaviours. Each member who can answer positively, takes a step forward and the winner is the first person to reach the end of the hall. You could challenge the group to think of 100 things to do without using electricity in less than 5 minutes, then use these examples as your questions. For example, 'take a step forward if you'

- walked to your meeting
- turned off the light as you left the room today
- cycled this week
- played a board game instead of a computer game
- re-used something so that energy wasn't used to replace it with something new



MELTING ICEBERGS GAME

Play this game like musical chairs, but replacing the seats with sheets of newspaper spread out on the floor, one sheet per member of the group. Explain that the sheets are icebergs and members are all polar bears. The group should move around the room pretending to swim in the cold water until the music stops, then they have to get to their iceberg. Take a sheet away each time until there is only one bear left. Discuss how our energy-hungry lifestyles use fossil fuels which contribute to climate change and how this, in turn, affects the home of the polar bear (see 'Threats' section).

POLAR EXPLORERS

How do we humans compare to polar bears? What preparation, equipment and special skills would help you to be safe and survive an Arctic mission? Become a polar explorer now and:

- find out about polar bears, what are their unique qualities which make them so well adapted to their icy habitat? What do they need to survive and what is threatening their existence?
- build a shoe box model showing the polar bear in its habitat, how they hunt and what they need to survive
- plan a trip to the Arctic. What would you need to survive, how would you keep warm, what would you eat?
- sleep outdoors for a night with your pack/group/unit or small group. Try a tent or bivouac. Find out about the Aurora Borealis (Northern lights). Consider everything you would need to survive. How you would keep warm, what would you eat, how would you carry the equipment? (Remember that camping, residential and sleepovers should follow your own organisations safely rules)

FANCY ADOPTING A POLAR BEAR?

We need to minimise the warming that's melting the polar bear's habitat: sea ice. To do this we're working to help cut global greenhouse gas emissions and encourage the switch to renewable energy. We work with communities across the Arctic to try and avoid them coming into conflict with polar bears. We fund research that aims to further our knowledge and understanding of the polar bear populations, and how they could respond to changes to their environment.

YOUR ADOPTION AND SUPPORT WILL HELP US:

- monitor polar bears movements, health and population sizes
- maintain a healthy Arctic environment and undisturbed ecosystems and healthy wildlife populations
- raise awareness of the threats of climate change that we all face
- work with communities to help reduce human-bear conflict

[Go to support.wwf.org.uk/adopt-a-polar-bear](https://www.wwf.org.uk/adopt-a-polar-bear) to find out more.



For a future where people and nature thrive | [wwf.org.uk](https://www.wwf.org.uk)

© 1986 panda symbol and ® "WWF" Registered Trademark of WWF. WWF-UK registered charity (1081247) and in Scotland (SC039593). A company limited by guarantee (4016725)

WWF-UK, registered charity number 1081247 and registered in Scotland number SC039593. A company limited by guarantee number 4016725 © 1986 panda symbol and ® "WWF" Registered Trademark of WWF-World Wide Fund For Nature (formerly World Wildlife Fund), Living Planet Centre, Rufford House, Brewery Road, Woking, Surrey GU21 4LL, T: +44 (0)1483 426333, E: youth@wwf.org.uk

