



Polar Bear

National Wildlife Refuge System

- Polar bears are marine mammals that prey on seals, ducks, walrus and some small whales.
- In the fall, pregnant females hibernate in a winter den and may not eat for up to eight months. Polar bear cubs stay with the mother for two to three years.
- Polar bears are the largest members of the bear family. Males can be up to 11 feet long and weigh up to 1,320 pounds. They have adapted well to their marine environment: white color for camouflage, water-repellent hair, thick underfur and black skin to absorb warmth. They have small suction cups on the soles of their feet for better traction on ice and their bodies can store large amounts of fat for times when food is scarce.
- Worldwide, polar bear populations are stable but threatened by climate change, contamination of their Arctic habitat and human development. There are two populations of polar bears in Alaska. There are about 24,000 worldwide in Alaska, Canada, Greenland, Norway and Russia. In the United States, polar bears are considered a “threatened” species.
- Curious polar bears typically move slowly and stop frequently to sniff the air. A threatened or agitated polar bear may huff, snap its jaws together, stare, lower its head and press its ears back.



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