

Polar Animals

Polar Bears

Polar bears are huge mammals that can weigh up to 700kg when they are fully grown and are the largest carnivores (meat eaters) to live on land. Polar bears are born between November and January and then spend up to five months in their den before they see the outside world. The cubs then stay with their mother for up to two years after that, before going on to live and hunt alone.

Although polar bears have their cubs on land, they actually spend most of their lives around water and ice, hunting for food. They are strong swimmers and can swim for hours to get from one piece of ice to another. As the winter gets particularly cold, the sea freezes and they are able to hunt many miles out to sea by walking across the thick sea ice. Polar bears mainly prey on seals as seal fat provides them with lots of energy to help them keep warm.

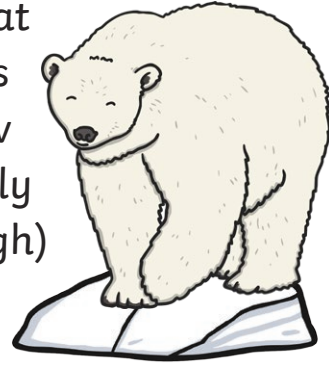


Wow!

They use their amazing sense of smell to find seals hidden under the snow. They can even smell an injured animal from up to one kilometre away. When polar bears get desperate for food, they will sometimes catch a whale or walrus.

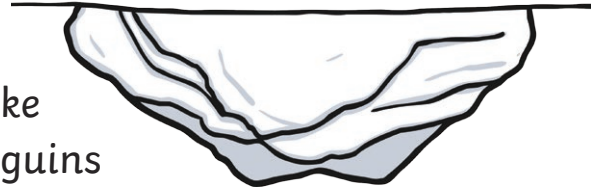
Polar bears live in the Arctic, at the very top of our planet, where the temperature can reach as low as -50°C . Water and steam will freeze almost instantly in the Arctic in winter. Thankfully, polar bears are adapted for this environment in different ways. Firstly, they have a thick layer of fat which keeps heat trapped

inside their bodies. On top of that, their coat not only keeps them warm, but also helps them to blend in with the snow. Despite how it might look, a polar bear's fur isn't really white. It's actually transparent (see-through) but reflects light, making it look white.



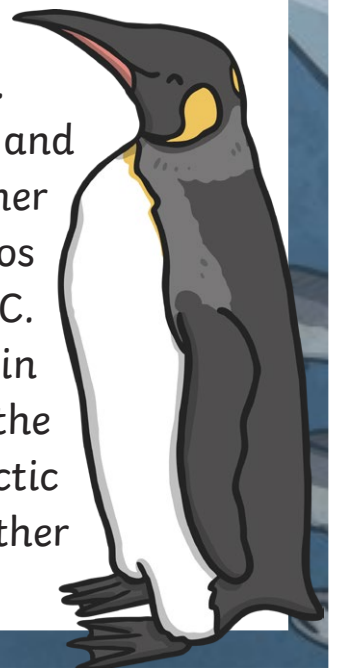
Penguins

Penguins are birds that spend much of their lives in the water and unlike most other birds, they cannot fly. Penguins do have wings but they are more like flippers to help them swim. As they live in water, their bodies have adapted so that they can swim brilliantly to catch food. Their bodies are smooth and dart-shaped so they glide easily through the water. They have dark feathers with light patches which help them to blend in so they are difficult to spot. This is very useful way to trick predators and avoid being eaten!



Penguins don't have to swim in deep water as the fish they catch are found near to the surface. Their feathers make their bodies waterproof.

Penguins are found on every continent in the southern hemisphere (the bottom half of the world). Most people think that penguins only live in the ice and snow but there are some species that live in warmer climates. The hottest penguin habitat is the Galapagos Islands, where temperatures can reach as high as 32°C. Emperor and Adélie penguins live in Antarctica in temperatures as low as -60°C. Emperor penguins are the only animals to stay on the open ice during an Antarctic winter, huddling together to survive the worst weather conditions on earth.



Questions

1. What is a carnivore?

2. What temperatures can it reach in the Arctic in winter?

3. From how far away can a polar bear smell an injured animal?

4. How are polar bears able to hunt many miles out at sea?

5. How have penguins adapted to their life in water? Give two ideas.

6. What is the southern hemisphere?

7. When do polar bears choose to stay on land?

8. Why don't penguins need to dive deep under water?

9. Which penguins spend the winter in the Antarctic?

10. Can you name any other birds that don't fly?

Answers

1. What is a carnivore?
A carnivore is a meat eater.
2. What temperatures can it reach in the Arctic in winter?
In the Arctic it can reach -50°C in winter.
3. From how far away can a polar bear smell an injured animal?
A polar bear can smell an injured animal from 1km away.
4. How are polar bears able to hunt many miles out at sea?
Polar bears can hunt many miles out at sea because the sea freezes and the polar bears walk across the ice.
5. How have penguins adapted to their life in water? Give two ideas.
Penguins have adapted using waterproof feathers, layer of fat, wings like flippers and body shaped to help them swim. (Accept two reasons given.)
6. What is the southern hemisphere?
The southern hemisphere is the bottom half of our planet.
7. When do polar bears choose to stay on land?
Polar bears choose to stay on land to have their cubs.
8. Why don't penguins need to dive deep under water?
Penguins don't need to dive deep into the water because the fish come near to the surface of the water.
9. Which penguins spend the winter in the Antarctic?
Emperor penguins are the only animals to stay on the open ice during an Antarctic winter.
10. Can you name any other birds that don't fly?
Examples: ostrich, emu, kiwi, kakapo.