

Polar Bears



by Gwen Nicodemus
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Polar bears look like they have white fur, but it is actually translucent.

Translucent substances let light pass through, but are not clear.

White things reflect most of the light that hits them, and black substances keep a lot of the heat that hits them.

Which scarf is going to be the warmest on a hot day? A white, pink, translucent, or black one?

Planet Earth has 8 types of bears. (There were more, but they are now extinct.)

Polar bears are one type. Polar bears:

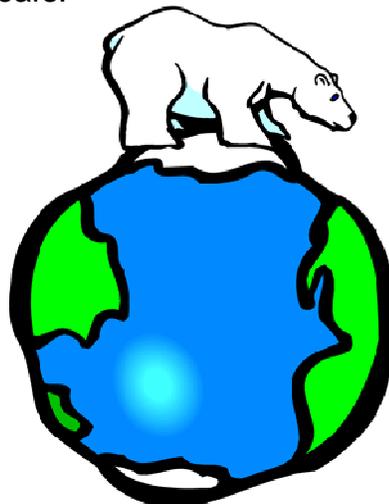
- are the biggest bears;
- are the only bears that still eat an almost exclusively carnivorous diet;
- have black skin as adults and pink skin when newly born; and,
- live in colder areas than any other bears.

Cubs that have left their mothers but are not mature are called sub-adults.



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Polar bears live in the Arctic circle. They don't actually live at the center of the arctic, at the "top" of the world, because that's too cold, even for polar bears.



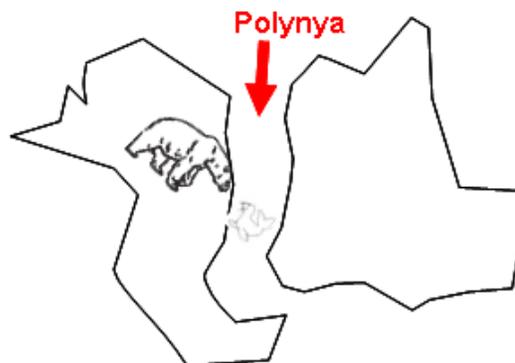
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- **January** – Babies might be born
- **February**
- **March, April, May, June** – If a female is old enough, and doesn't have cubs, she will mate.
- **July** – Pregnant females start to gain weight.
- **August**
- **September** – Embryos implant and start to develop
- **October, November**– Female enters a den.
- **December** – Babies might be born



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Polar bears hunt seals by waiting quietly on the ice near where a seal is likely to come up for air to breathe.



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Polar bears like to eat seals. Adult polar bears eat the seal's blubber, or fat. Adult polar bears do not eat the meat part of the seal unless they are really hungry. The meat takes too much water to digest, and polar bears do not see a lot of fresh water to drink.



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Young polar bear cubs are called "Cubs of the Year" or COYs.

Polar bear cubs stay with their mothers for 2 to 2.5 years. While a female polar bear has cubs to care for, she will not get pregnant. Once the cubs are on their own, she will be ready for pregnancy again.



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Female polar bears are mature at 3-4 years old.

Male polar bears need a couple more years, because they have to be able to fight other male polar bears, and win, to be able to mate.



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Female polar bears mate sometime in between March and July, but the embryos do not implant right away.

The female polar bear then spends the Spring and Summer gaining weight. She might gain up to an extra 400 pounds.

Usually around September the embryo will implant and the polar bear cubs start to grow.

The mother build a den and goes into it in October or November.

The babies are born in December or January. Polar bears almost always have 2 cubs.

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