



Polar Bear Facts

Just like whales, seals, and dolphins, polar bears are considered marine mammals.

Polar bears are the only species of bear that depends on the ocean ecosystem to survive—their life is tied to sea ice. This fun fact is even hidden in their scientific name: *Ursus maritimus* means “sea bear.”

Polar bears have amazing adaptations for dealing with life on the sea ice. A thick layer of fat and two layers of fur help keep them warm. Compact ears and a small tail prevent heat loss. Small pads on the bottom of their paws, called *papillae*, grip the ice and prevent them from slipping—like winter tires! Curved claws are perfect for gripping and pulling seals from their breathing holes.

Polar bears rely on sea ice as a platform for reaching their seal prey. Bears catch seals at their breathing holes or along ice edges when seals come up for air. Without

sea ice, polar bears would struggle to survive in many parts of the Arctic.

Sea ice acts like Earth’s air conditioner, keeping the planet, people, and wildlife cool around the globe. The biggest threat to polar bears is sea ice loss due to a warming climate, but we can protect sea ice and polar bears by reducing our fossil fuel use. Burning fossil fuels adds heat-trapping emissions—like CO₂—to our atmosphere. When we trap too much heat, ice melts!

Your actions to reduce your carbon footprint and conserve energy will have a significant impact on polar bears and the planet over the course of your life—especially if you take what you know and share it with friends, family and schoolmates! Check out Polar Bears International’s action programs to see how students can get involved.

