

Polar Bear

(*Ursus maritimus*)

- Polar bears are large mammals which have adaptations, such as a significant fat reserve, to survive in the high north on sea ice.
- Their white fur covers their entire body except for the tip of their nose. They even have fur on the bottom of their feet!
- They feed primarily on seals.
- Females construct dens in the snow and hibernate during the winter months.



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Provincial Distribution



Habitat/ Range

Polar bears found are found along the coast of Labrador. They are most often found on sea ice, visiting land for only short periods; however, they may be forced onto land for several or more months when sea ice is unavailable. They occasionally visit the island of Newfoundland on spring ice, but will move north again.

Population Trends

Polar bears found in Newfoundland and Labrador are part of the Davis Strait sub-population. The exact numbers of polar bears that inhabit the Labrador coastline are unknown but may number in the hundreds. The total Canadian population is about 15 000 bears.

Limiting Factors and Threats

Polar bear populations face a variety of threats including over-harvesting, contaminants, habitat disturbance, mortality associated with incidental human contact, and the effects of climate change.

Special Significance

The polar bear is a significant part of Labrador Inuit culture and mythology. Inuit have exclusive rights to harvest six polar bears per year under a quota system along the Labrador coast.

You can help protect the polar bear:

- Reduce mortalities associated with humans - understand how to avoid polar bears and respond in the event of a polar bear encounter.
- Do your part to reduce the effects of climate change.

Department of Environment & Conservation

Wildlife Division

Endangered Species & Biodiversity

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