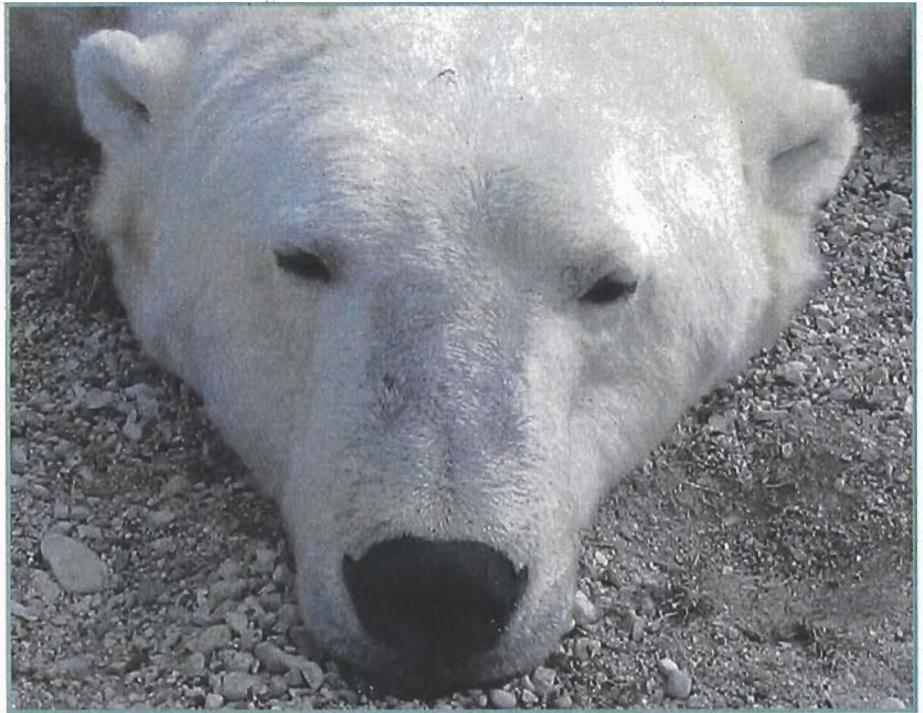


POLAR BEAR adoption



Snowy has been adopted by
The Pioneer PolarKAT Team

Snowy is a 23 year old polar bear who lives in the Canadian Arctic near Hudson Bay. She is part of one of the world's best known groups of polar bears, which is closely monitored by a team of experienced and dedicated scientists.

By adopting Snowy you are helping her and other wild polar bears of the circumpolar Arctic, to have a better future.

Your adoption allows us to support vital research to ensure polar bears and their habitat are afforded the best possible protection.

4th April 2006

The adoption is valid for one year from this date.

Dr Barbara Maas, Chief Executive



By adopting Snowy through Care for the Wild International you have made a very personal connection with one of the Arctic's most magnificent inhabitants. By helping her and other wild polar bears to have a better future you have become part of her story.

There are only 21,500 to 25,000 polar bears left in the world. During the winter, the frozen sea ice of Canada's Hudson Bay is Snowy's home. During summer, when the sea ice is melting, Snowy returns to the coastal areas around the bay near Churchill. Snowy is closely watched over by a dedicated team of researchers from the Canadian Wildlife Service and the University of Alberta, who have been studying this population for over 30 years.

Starting from the colour of their incredibly dense fur, polar bears are uniquely equipped to survive in one of the harshest environments on earth: the circumpolar Arctic. In temperatures as low as -50°C, often made worse by ferocious winds that can persist for weeks on end, keeping warm is one of the most important survival skills. Polar bears are superbly adapted to their icy world and what is more, they are at home in the water as much as on solid ground (their scientific name '*Ursus maritimus*' means 'bear of the sea'). Large partially-webbed feet allow them to swim through the icy sea water for over 100 kilometres. Their thick fur, which even covers much of the underside of their paws, and thick layers of fat insulate them well against freezing conditions. It is a little known fact that unlike their pristine white coats, which serve as perfect camouflage, polar bear skin is black, to allow the animals to conserve as much heat as possible.

Snowy is one of about 950 polar bears that live in Canada's Western Hudson Bay. This population has been well studied for the past 30 years. This is how we know that Snowy is currently nestled down in a maternity den, which means she is probably pregnant. Snowy has raised at least six cubs before but we won't know until the spring if there are to be more. Maternity dens tend to consist of a single chamber measuring about 2 meters by 1.5 meters, although some females are more architecturally creative and dig two, and even three room complexes. Inside these dens, mothers and cubs are well protected from the Arctic winter outside. Scientists found that it is about 21°C (37°F) warmer inside due to the bear's body heat and the snow's insulating properties.

Although polar bears are the largest land carnivore on earth, females give birth to tiny cubs who weigh no more than 1 to 1.5 pounds. Mothers cuddle them close to their bodies to keep them warm until they emerge from their snowy home in the spring to catch their first glimpse of the outside world. During this time, Snowy will not leave the cubs once. Although she will be nursing her young, Snowy will have to depend solely on her fat reserves until then.

It is due to the unique insights into these polar bears' lives that researchers became aware that the number of bears in this population has been shrinking over the past 10 years. They were able to pinpoint the cause to hunting, conflict with humans and most disparagingly, global warming, which literally robs the bears of a place to live by reducing the pack ice they need to hunt. Scientists now predict that more than a third of the world's polar bear population will disappear in the next 35-50 years. Other factors threatening the survival of polar bears include pollution and other human activities such as mining and drilling for oil.

If we want to protect Snowy and her wild friends we need to continue with this important conservation work. Through this adoption, you are helping to make this happen.

Thank you on behalf of everyone at Care for the Wild International, Snowy and her wild cousins.

Care for the Wild International is an animal welfare and conservation charity that funds practical projects around the world. We make areas safe from poachers, rehabilitate sick or injured animals and provide sanctuary for those who can not return to the wild. We also act as a global voice for wildlife through research, education and advocacy.



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