

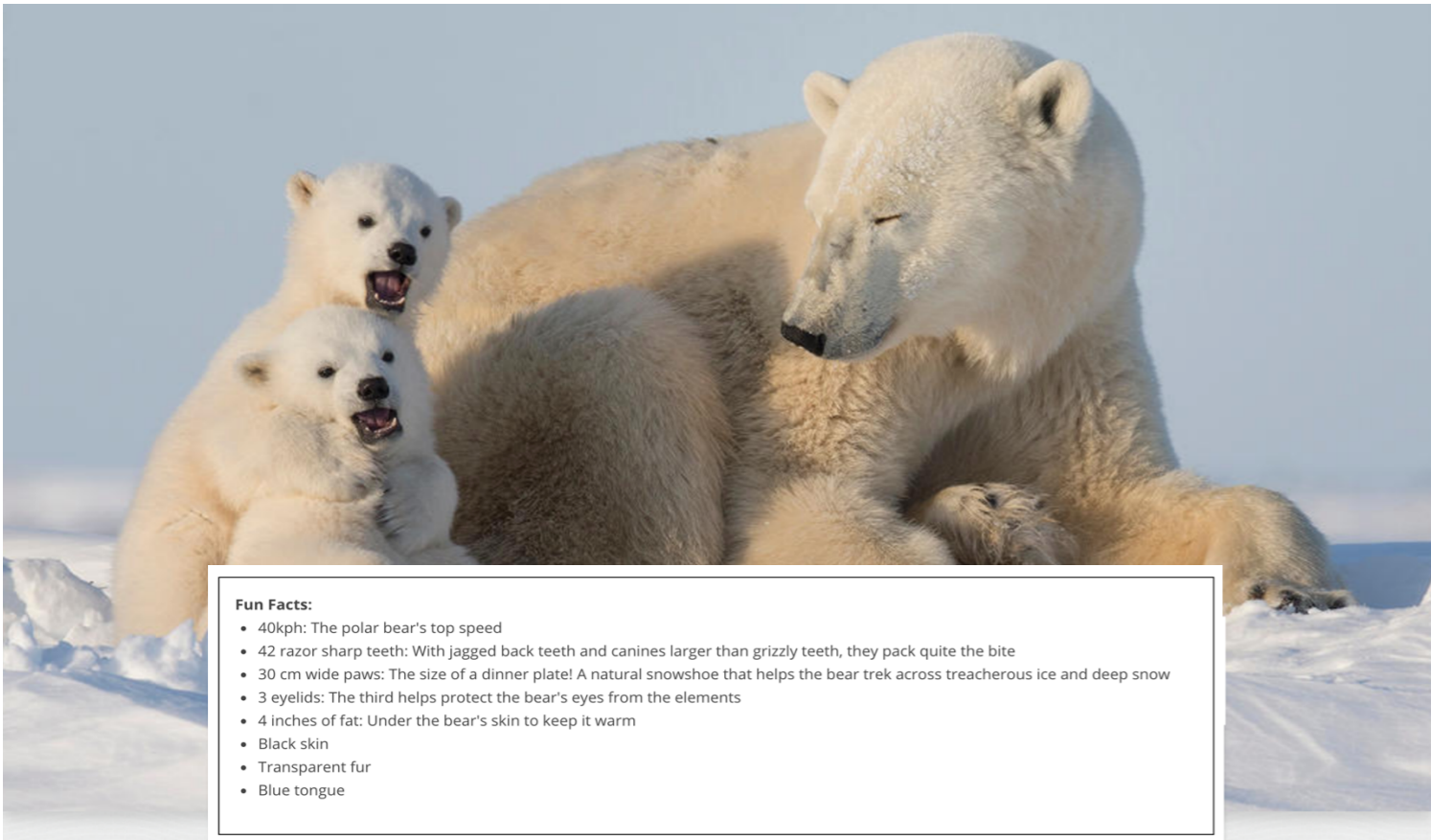
- Comment on how this online appeal presents information in ways that could persuade readers to 'adopt a polar bear.'



ADOPT A POLAR BEAR

Give a gift that will help protect the future of nature. Make a symbolic adoption in support of WWF's global efforts.

- Polar Bear
- Facts
- Why They Matter
- Threats
- What WWF is Doing
- How You Can Help
- ADOPT A POLAR BEAR**



Fun Facts:

- 40kph: The polar bear's top speed
- 42 razor sharp teeth: With jagged back teeth and canines larger than grizzly teeth, they pack quite the bite
- 30 cm wide paws: The size of a dinner plate! A natural snowshoe that helps the bear trek across treacherous ice and deep snow
- 3 eyelids: The third helps protect the bear's eyes from the elements
- 4 inches of fat: Under the bear's skin to keep it warm
- Black skin
- Transparent fur
- Blue tongue

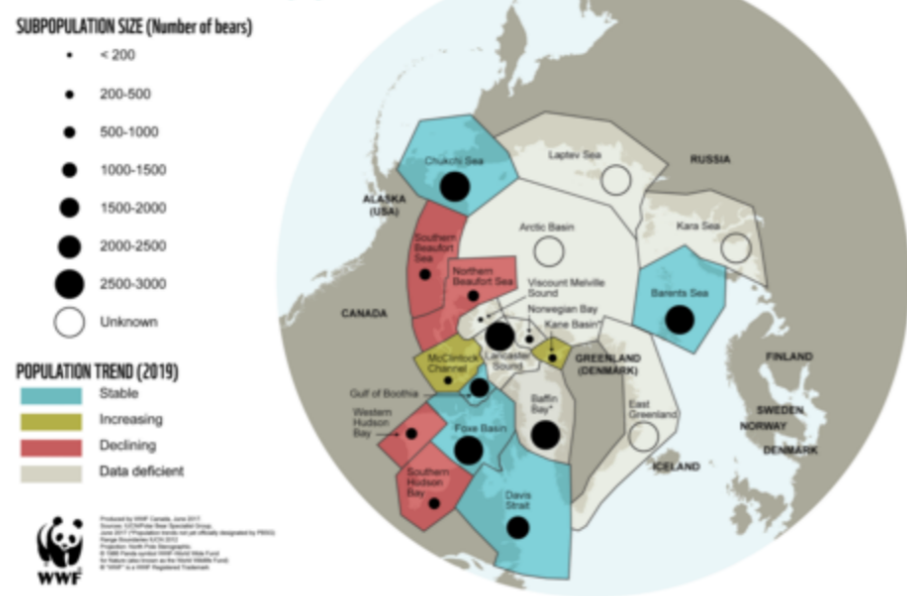
The largest bear in the world and the Arctic's top predator, polar bears are a powerful symbol of the strength and endurance of the Arctic. The polar bear's Latin name, *Ursus maritimus*, means "sea bear." It's an apt name for this majestic species, which spends much of its life in, around, or on the ocean—predominantly on the sea ice. In the United States, Alaska is home to two polar bear subpopulations.

Considered talented swimmers, polar bears can sustain a pace of six miles per hour by paddling with their front paws and holding their hind legs flat like a rudder. They have a thick layer of body fat and a water-repellent coat that insulates them from the cold air and water.

Polar bears spend over 50% of their time hunting for food. A polar bear might catch only one or two out of 10 seals it hunts, depending on the time of year and other variables. Their diet mainly consists of ringed and bearded seals because they need large amounts of fat to survive.

Polar bears rely heavily on sea ice for traveling, hunting, resting, mating and, in some areas, maternal dens. But because of ongoing and potential loss of their sea ice habitat resulting from climate change—the primary threat to polar bears Arctic-wide—polar bears were listed as a threatened species in the US under the Endangered Species Act in May 2008. As their sea ice habitat recedes earlier in the spring and forms later in the fall, polar bears are increasingly spending longer periods on land, where they are often attracted to areas where humans live.

Trends in Polar Bear Subpopulations



- STATUS**
Vulnerable
- POPULATION**
22,000-31,000
- SCIENTIFIC NAME**
Ursus maritimus
- WEIGHT**
800–1,300 pounds (males), 300-700 (females)
- LENGTH**
6–9 feet
- HABITATS**
Arctic Ocean, sea ice, and adjacent coastal areas

THREATS

POPULATION
22,000-31,000

EXTINCTION RISK
Vulnerable



- *Fewer opportunities to feed*

Polar bears rely on sea ice to hunt seals, rest, breed, and store energy for the summer and autumn, when food can be scarce. Sea ice now melts earlier in the spring and forms later in the autumn in the bears' southern range, like Hudson Bay and James Bay in Canada. As the bears spend longer periods without food, their health declines. For every week earlier that the ice breaks up in Hudson Bay, bears come ashore roughly 22 pounds lighter and in poorer condition. In the US, polar bears have experienced significant changes to seasonal variability and availability of sea ice habitat. For example, polar bears in the southern Beaufort Sea have recently experienced about twice as many reduced ice days over continental shelf waters than polar bears in the Chukchi and Bering Seas nearby. As a result, polar bears studied in the Chukchi and Bering Seas were larger, in better condition, and had higher reproduction rates likely since they had more access to food and did not have to fast for as long in the spring as those living in the southern Beaufort Sea. Bears must move longer distances to stay with the rapidly receding ice. In most areas, they come ashore when ice melts and rely on fat stores until the ice refreezes so they can go back out to hunt. Traditional prey species may be less accessible in a new sea ice environment, and seals that use the ice are predicted to fare poorly in the warming Arctic region.

- *Fewer cubs*

Some polar bears may suffer from malnutrition. In extreme cases they may face starvation—especially females with cubs. Unhealthy bears can lead to lower reproduction rates and extinction in certain locations. Scientists have found the main cause of death for cubs to be either lack of food or lack of fat on nursing mothers

- *Habitat fragmentation*

Climate change is also resulting in more habitat fragmentation. As Arctic ice melts, polar bears are affected by increased shipping activities and a rise in opportunities for oil and gas development, that WWF is currently fighting against.

POLAR BEAR- HUMAN CONFLICTS

As Arctic sea ice thins and retreats, increasing numbers of polar bears are spending longer periods in the summer open-water season along Arctic coastlines. Here, their powerful sense of smell attracts them to human communities: garbage, stored food, dog teams, and animal carcasses bring them into greater conflict with Arctic people.

As powerful predators, polar bears pose a major risk to human life and property. Throughout the polar bear's range, attacks on humans and property continue to rise. In recent years, more than 20 direct attacks on humans have been reported within the polar bear's range.

WWF is supporting community initiatives to ensure they can live safely alongside the Arctic's top predator.