



Student Activity

Climate Change & Polar Bears

NATURE Science Education Series

Vocabulary:

plankton, narwhal, permafrost, carnivore, guillemots

Pre-Viewing Discussion:

What do you know about polar bears? How do their behavioral patterns differ from those of brown bears or grizzlies?

Under normal conditions, what foods do polar bears eat?

Why is it becoming more difficult for them to find adequate food sources?

Do you think that climate change will affect the lives of Northern grizzlies? If their environment gets warmer, what are they likely to do? Will it be easier for them to survive than it will be for polar bears?

Post-Viewing Discussion:

What adaptations have enabled polar bears to survive on Arctic icecaps? Why do some biologists consider them to be marine mammals?

How large is a newborn polar bear cub? How long will the mother go without food before she and her baby attempt the journey to their ice-bound habitat? What happens to many polar bear cubs before they reach the ice?

Why can't polar bears learn to live on insects, berries, and salmon as northern grizzlies do? Why isn't interspecies mating the answer to the polar bear's dilemma?

Do you think that governments should declare the polar bear an endangered species? Why or why not?

Further Activities:

Find out how citizens in Churchill, Manitoba, deal with their polar bear problem. Consider other options that might remedy the situation or make it easier on the bears.

Further investigate how plankton released by melting ice caps is affecting wildlife populations.

Research the design of polar bear exhibits in zoos in North America to determine how biologists, architects, and engineers work together to make the bears feel at home.

Find out how you could become a wildlife biologist involved in polar bear rescue.