

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



# The Amazingly Adapted Polar Bear

By Guy Belleranti

Animals have special adaptations that help them survive in their habitats. One of the most interesting is the polar bear of the Arctic.

To stay warm, polar bears have two layers of fur. The hairs of the outer coat are hollow, increasing their insulating ability. They also have a thick, warm coat of fur below the outer coat. Underneath their fur polar bears have black skin which helps absorb heat. Underneath this skin polar bears can put on a layer of fat for even more insulation. In fact, during the cold of winter this fat may be over 4 inches thick!

Polar bears in warm-weather zoos can also adapt quite well. When living in a warm climate, they don't put on the thick fat layer because extra insulation isn't needed.

While polar bears do occasionally eat sea vegetation and berries, they prefer to hunt. In fact, they are the best hunters of all bears. When on land they often camouflage themselves by placing their paws over their black nose and mouth. Polar bears have the best vision of any bear and an excellent sense of smell. Fur and rough bumps on the soles of their wide, snowshoe-like feet provide traction on ice.

Polar bears are well adapted for swimming to ice floes in search of their favorite food—seals. They use their partially webbed front feet to paddle, while steering with their back feet. They have a more elongated body and head than other bears. This shape helps them move through the water. In fact, this marine mammal can swim for 60 miles without stopping.



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1. What color is a polar bear's skin?
  - a. white
  - b. gray
  - c. light yellow
  - d. black
2. How does a polar bear's skin color help it to survive in the cold winter?  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Are polar bears carnivores, herbivores, or omnivores? \_\_\_\_\_
4. How does the elongated head and body of a polar bear help it to survive?
  - a. They help the polar bear hide in the snow.
  - b. They help the polar bear swim through water more quickly.
  - c. They help keep the polar bear warm.
  - d. They help polar bears find berries and sea vegetation.
5. Read the following sentence from the article.

*This marine mammal can swim for 60 miles without stopping.*

Which is the best definition for the underlined word?

- a. an animal from the Arctic
  - b. an animal that does not get tired easily
  - c. an animal that spends a lot of time in the water
  - d. an animal with four legs
6. Read the following sentence from the article.

*Fur and rough bumps on the soles of their wide, snowshoe-like feet provide traction on ice.*

Which is the best definition for the underlined word?

- a. ability to avoid slipping
- b. ability to jump high
- c. ability to slide on something
- d. ability to keep warm

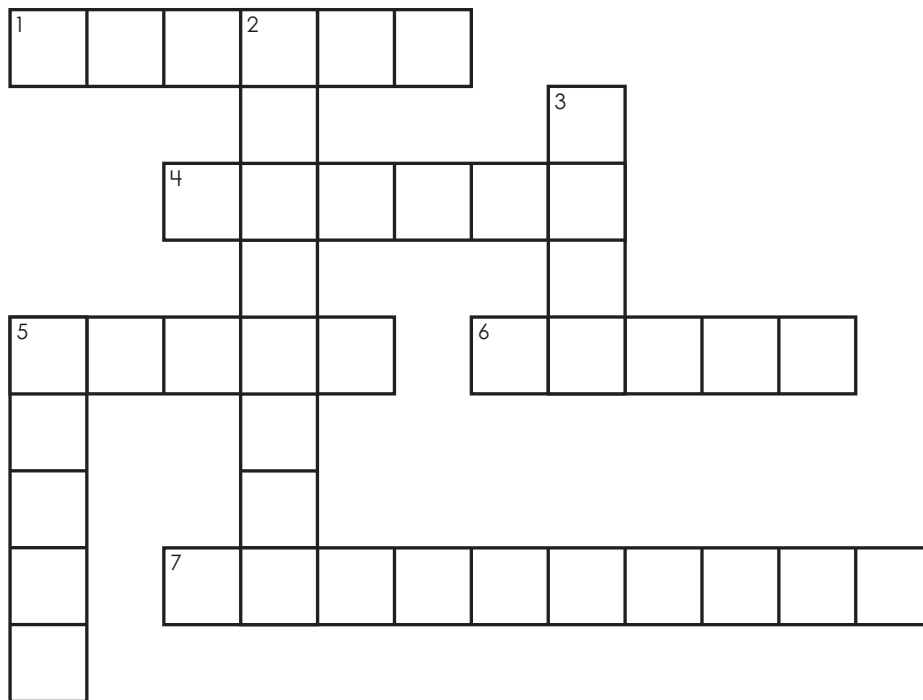
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Use the information in the article to complete the crossword puzzle.



## Across

1. region of the world where polar bears live
4. a polar bear's front legs do this while swimming
5. the number of miles a polar bear can swim without stopping
6. the color of a polar bear's skin
7. polar bears can put on a layer of fat to keep them warm and act as \_\_\_\_\_

## Down

2. a polar bear's snowshoe-like feet provide this so they don't slip on ice
3. polar bears love to hunt this animal
5. a polar bear's back legs do this while swimming

## ANSWER KEY



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**The black skin absorbs heat and keeps them warm.**

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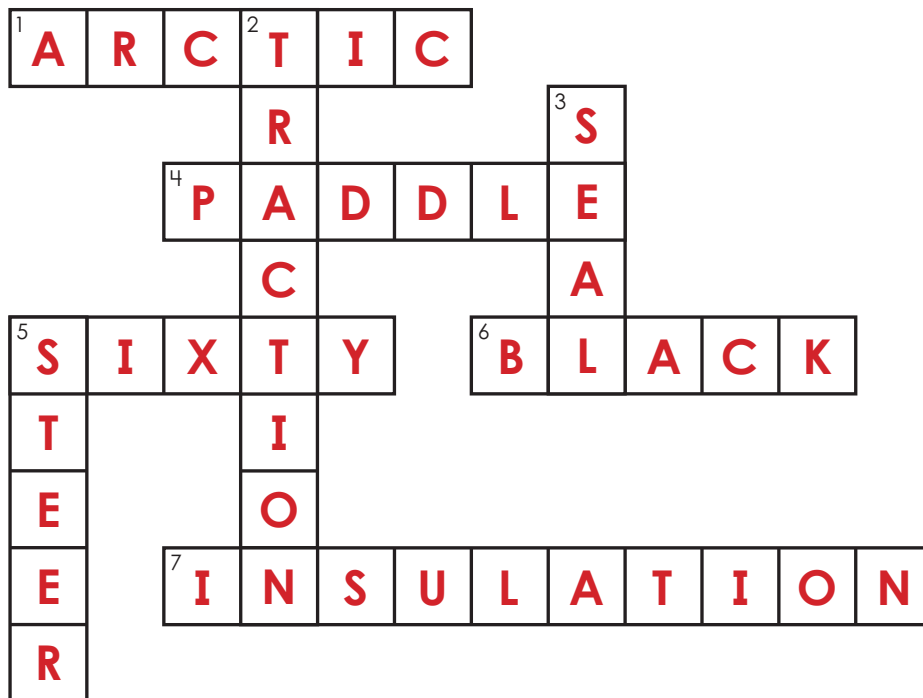
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