

Name: _____

The Amazingly Adapted Arctic Fox

By Guy Belleranti



A fascinating hunter makes its home in the Arctic tundra. The fluffy white mammal is known to leap high in the air before pouncing on the burrow of its suspected prey. After a few seconds of furious digging, the small hunter emerges from the snow-covered ground with a tasty snack—a lemming. What animal uses such acrobatic hunting techniques? The arctic fox.

Arctic foxes live in all regions of the northern Arctic. You might be surprised to learn that arctic foxes don't hibernate, even though their habitat is very cold. They live in underground burrows and are active throughout the year.

These foxes are amazingly adapted for their habitat. Thick multilayered fur keeps them extra warm. In winter, this coat is white (or occasionally blue-gray). This provides camouflage in the snow and ice. In summer, the coat turns a brown-gray, helping the foxes blend in with rocks and small Arctic tundra plants.

Arctic foxes have a big fluffy tail. This tail makes a great scarf. Meanwhile, their furry paws, small ears, and short muzzle helps prevent heat loss. The fur on the bottom of their paws keeps them from slipping when they run across ice.

As winter approaches, Arctic foxes increase their body fat by eating as much as they can. This fat provides extra insulation and energy. What do arctic foxes eat? Since these animals are omnivores, they eat other animals (lemmings, hares, small birds, fish, as well as eggs) and plants (berries and seaweed). When food is scarce, they eat the scraps left behind by polar bears and wolves. Arctic foxes can find prey above ground or beneath the snow because of their excellent senses of hearing and smell.

Arctic foxes usually mate for life. The mother gives birth to five, ten, or even more pups. Both parents raise the pups in underground dens that often include a network of many tunnels.

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1. In the article, you learned how arctic foxes are uniquely adapted to their environment. Describe three ways an arctic fox's body helps it stay warm in the cold arctic climate.

2. Based on the information in the article, which choice below **best** describes the amount of energy an arctic fox uses when it hunts prey?

- a. no energy at all b. very little energy
c. some energy d. a lot of energy

3. In the article, you learned that arctic foxes are omnivores. Based on what you know about an arctic fox's diet, circle the animal that might have the **most similar** diet to an arctic fox.

rabbit deer brown bear tiger

4. The article doesn't mention whether or not arctic foxes are an endangered species. If you had to take an educated guess, based on the text, would you classify the arctic fox as endangered, threatened, or populous (meaning there are a lot of them)? What clues from the article helped you decide?

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The scrambled words below are vocabulary words from the article. Unscramble each word and write it on the line. Please be sure each word is spelled correctly.

1. _____

m e m l i n g

hint: small rodent that arctic foxes eat

2. _____

n i n s o t u a l i

hint: something that is used to contain heat

3. _____

r a t c i c

hint: the region around the North Pole

4. _____

b e r t h n a i e

hint: spend the winter in a state of sleep

5. _____

m o u a c g e f l a

hint: the ability to blend in with one's surroundings

6. _____

t a h t i b a

hint: environment in which an animal lives

7. _____

r w o b u r

hint: an underground tunnel or hole where an animal lives

ANSWER KEY

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1. In the article, you learned how arctic foxes are uniquely adapted to their environment. Describe three ways an arctic fox's body helps it stay warm in the cold arctic climate. **Answers will vary. Examples include:**

They have thick, multilayered fur; they have a big, fluffy tail;

their furry paws, short ears and short muzzle prevent heat loss;

they have a layer of body fat that insulates them; the fur on their paws helps keep them from slipping on ice.

2. Based on the information in the article, which choice below **best** describes the amount of energy an arctic fox uses when it hunts prey?
- a. no energy at all b. very little energy
c. some energy **d. a lot of energy**
3. In the article, you learned that arctic foxes are omnivores. Based on what you know about an arctic fox's diet, circle the animal that might have the **most similar** diet to an arctic fox.

rabbit

deer

brown bear

tiger

4. The article doesn't mention whether or not arctic foxes are an endangered species. If you had to take an educated guess, based on the text, would you classify the arctic fox as endangered, threatened, or populous (meaning there are a lot of them)? What clues from the article helped you decide?

The arctic fox is populous. The article states that arctic foxes

live in all regions of the northern Arctic. They are also extremely

adaptable. These clues help us figure out that they aren't

endangered or threatened.

ANSWER KEY

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1. _____ **lemming**

m e m l i n g

hint: small rodent that arctic foxes eat

2. _____ **insulation**

n i n s o t u a l i

hint: something that is used to contain heat

3. _____ **arctic**

r a t c i c

hint: the region around the North Pole

4. _____ **hibernate**

b e r t h n a i e

hint: spend the winter in a state of sleep

5. _____ **camouflage**

m o u a c g e f l a

hint: the ability to blend in with one's surroundings

6. _____ **habitat**

t a h t i b a

hint: environment in which an animal lives

7. _____ **burrow**

r w o b u r

hint: an underground tunnel or hole where an animal lives