

Animals of the Arctic



**Read
Aloud**

Written by Yein Suh
Photographs by Peg & Datiz, Student Conservationists
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Datiz



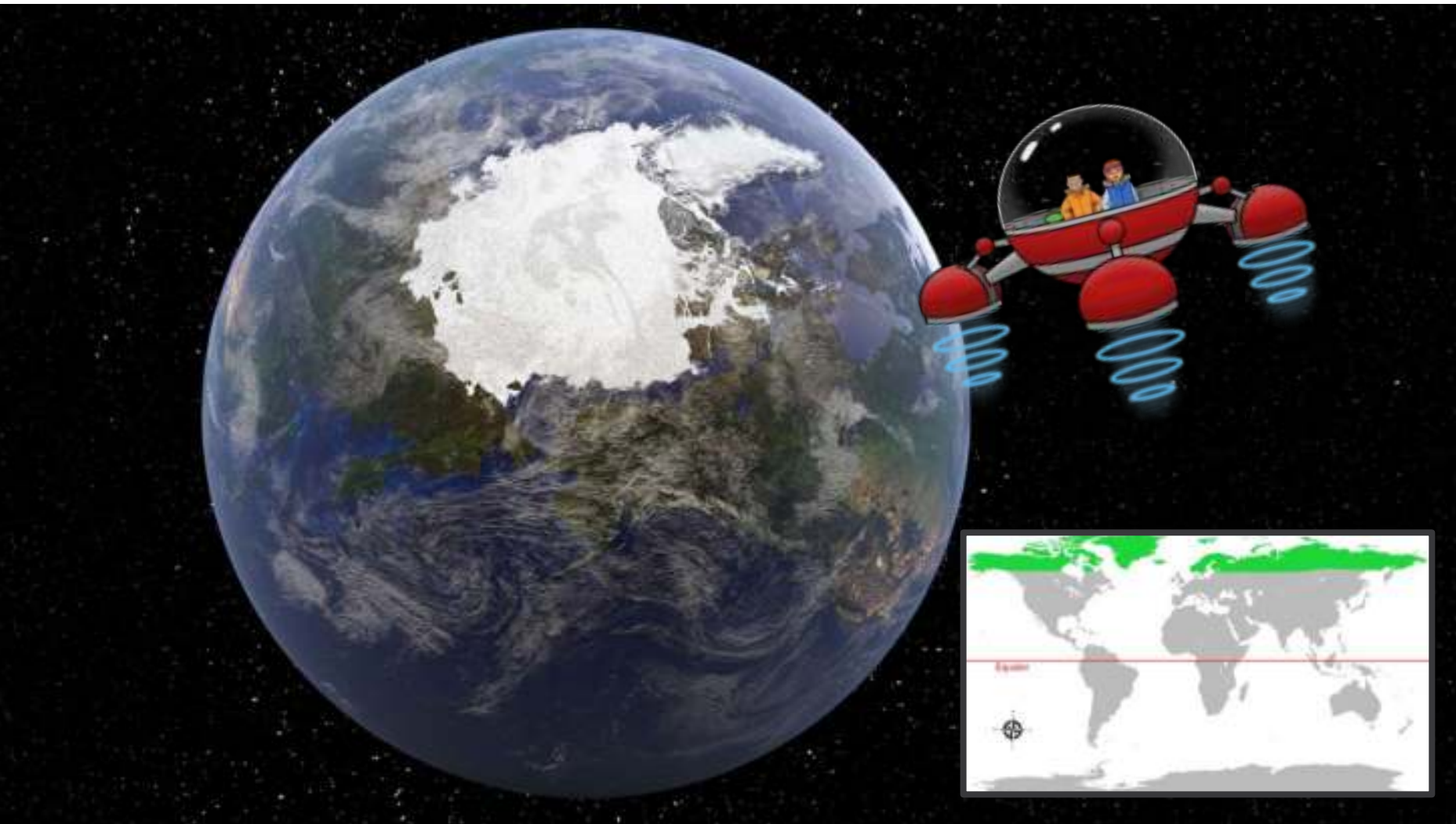
Peg

Characters



Ms. Lee teaches her class about the **Arctic Circle**. It is an area around the **North Pole** that is very different from other places. In the winter there are **polar nights**, where the sun does not rise for months. Then in the summer there are **midnight suns**, when the sun does not set for months at a time.

Ms. Lee also talks about the unique animals living in the Arctic Circle that can endure the cold weather. She talks about arctic hares, ermines, arctic foxes, arctic wolves and polar bears.



Peg and Datz want to see all the arctic animals, because they are student conservationists. But they are most excited to see polar bears. They go on a journey to the Arctic Circle to learn about polar bears and other animals.



As soon as Peg and Datz step out of their ship they are surprised at how cold it is. Datz takes out the thermometer to measure the temperature. It says that it is -22°F (-30°C).

Datz asks Peg, "How could any animal live where it's this cold?"



Just then, Peg sees something moving near the rock. She yells, "Datiz, look! I think I see a rabbit."

But Datiz does not see anything.

Peg points over by the rocks and says, "It's really well **camouflaged**. It must be an arctic hare."

Datiz shouts, "Oh, I see it! Wow, it will be hard to find arctic animals if they are all this well camouflaged."



Peg and Datz start walking through the snow, and they see something white moving in a **zigzag** manner. Peg checks her tablet to pull up a picture of the animal.

“It looks like an ermine,” says Peg. “But the picture on my tablet shows a brown ermine, not a white one.”

Datz replies, “Ermines change the color of their fur depending on the season. In the spring and summer they are brown and white, but in the winter they turn completely white to blend in with the snow.”



Peg and Datz continue walking. This time Datz finds an animal camouflaged in the snow. He asks, "Is that a polar bear?"

Peg looks at her tablet and replies, "No, it's an arctic fox. It is much smaller than a polar bear, and its paws are covered in thick fur to help it walk on snow and ice."



Next, Peg finds another animal. She tells Datiz, "It's bigger than the arctic fox. Is that a polar bear?"

Datiz looks at his tablet and replies, "No. That is an arctic wolf. It is much smaller than a polar bear. They have short ears, short legs, and short **muzzles**. This helps them keep their body heat."

Peg says, "I just realized polar bears hunt on sea ice, not in the forest. If we want to find them, we should go to the sea."



Winter is coming to an end, and the sea ice is starting to break apart. Peg and Datz carefully walk across the ice, but they do not see any polar bears.

Suddenly, Peg sees a spout of water coming from the ocean. She looks into the water and sees a strange white face looking at her. "What could be under the ice?" asks Peg.

"I brought my arctic **scuba** gear! Let's take a look under the water," exclaims Datz.



Datiz plunges into the water. He can't believe what he sees. "It's a **beluga** whale!" shouts Datiz.

Datiz tells Peg, "Beluga whales only live in the **arctic ocean**. They can be up to 15 feet long, and they can dive up to 2,000 feet under the water to look for food."

Datiz explains to Peg, "Because belugas come up for air, they sometimes get trapped in holes in the ice. Polar bears will prey on belugas that are trapped. Now that the ice is breaking up this whale can move around the ocean again."

Peg says, "We must be getting closer to the polar bears. Let's keep going."



After coming out of the water, Peg and Datz continue on their journey to find the polar bears. Finally, in the distance, they spot a polar bear walking along the sea ice.

"Can you see the polar bear?" asks Peg.

"Yes, but its white coat camouflages the bear against the icy landscape," says Datz.



Ringed Seal



Bearded Seal



Peg and Datz continue to follow the polar bear.

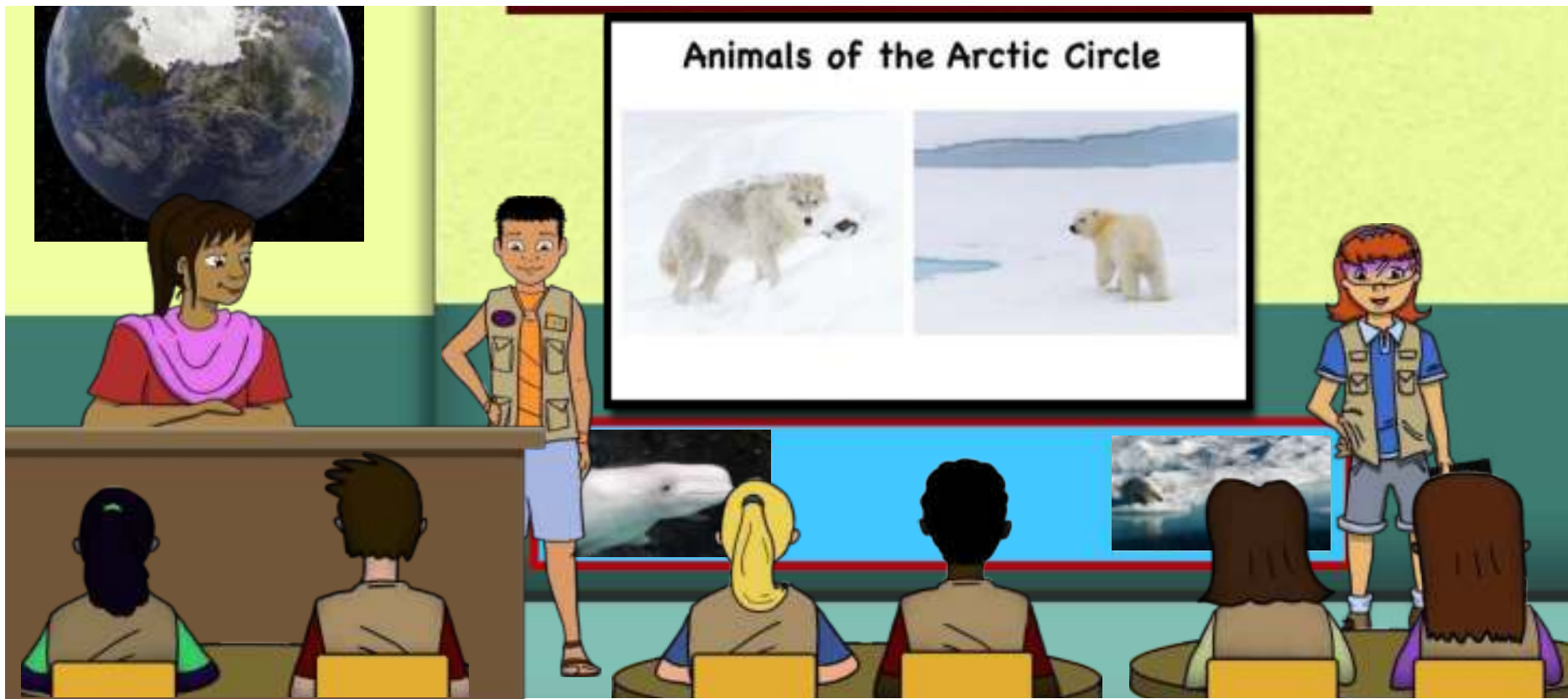
Peg explains to Datz, "Polar bears can walk for hundreds of miles across the ice in search of seals to eat. They spend most of their time on the sea ice hunting **bearded seals** and **ringed seals**. Seals make up most of a polar bear's diet."



As Peg and Datz follow the polar bear, they sometimes see it swim in between the blocks of ice.

Peg says to Datz, "Polar bears are excellent swimmers, but it takes more energy for a polar bear to swim than to walk. Because every year the Arctic gets warmer, the sea ice melts earlier, and the polar bears have less time to hunt and build up their fat reserves."

Peg and Datz are excited to teach their class about everything they learned about the animals of the Arctic Circle.



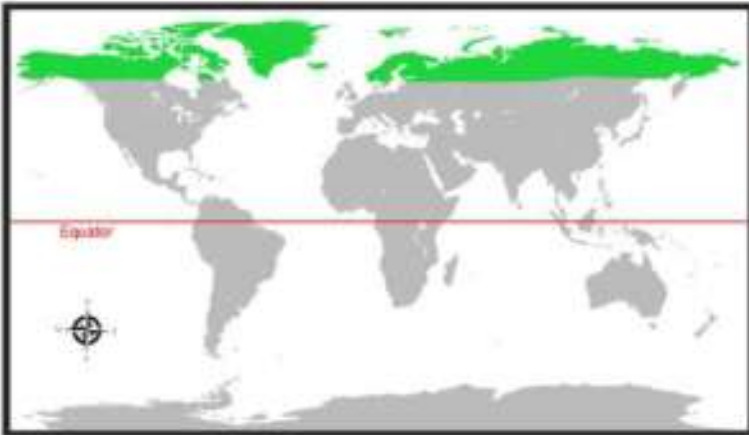
Peg and Datz return to their class.

They explain that the animals of the Arctic Circle are masters of camouflage and blend into the white snow that covers their **habitat**.

They tell the other students that polar bears spend most of their time hunting, but now they have less time to hunt because the sea ice melts earlier each year. If this continues, polar bears could become an **endangered** species.

The students want to learn more about what they can do to help polar bears survive. 15

Map of the Arctic Circle



Arctic Facts

- The name 'Arctic' comes from the Greek word that means 'near the bear'.
- The North Pole and the region of Arctic Ocean surrounding it do not belong to any country by international law.
- The lowest temperature recorded in the Arctic is around -90°F (-68°C).
- The Arctic contains a variety of natural resources including oil, gas, fish, and diverse minerals.
- The periods of midnight suns and polar nights become longer as we approach the North Pole. The sun sets and rises once a year at the North Pole.
- Due to **global warming**, the Arctic region has shrunk over the years.
- Scientists have predicted that the Arctic ice in the summer might completely disappear by 2040.



Glossary

Arctic Circle (p. 3) an imaginary line drawn around the earth parallel to the equator marking the boundary of the Arctic.

Arctic Ocean (p. 11) ocean that surrounds the North Pole.

Bearded Seals (p. 13) a medium-sized pinniped that is found in and near to the Arctic Ocean.

Beluga (p. 11) a white, round-headed whale living in the Arctic Ocean.

Camouflage (p. 6) a way of hiding something by covering or coloring it so that it looks like its surroundings.

Endangered (p. 15) in a dangerous situation.

Extremities (p. 9) the parts of the body at the ends of the limbs; hands and feet.

Global Warming (p. 17) an increase in the world's temperatures.

Glossary

Habitat (p. 15) the natural environment of an animal or plant.

Muzzle (p. 9) the nose and mouth of an animal.

North Pole (p. 3) the point on the earth's surface that is farthest north.

Polar Night (P.3) the time of the year when sun does not rise in polar regions.

Midnight Sun (p. 3) the sun as it is seen at midnight during summer in the Arctic regions.

Ringed Seal (p. 13) an earless seal inhabiting the Arctic regions.

Scuba (p. 10) a portable tool for underwater breathing, carried on the back.

Zigzag (p. 7) a line that moves abruptly from left to right, instead of straight.

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Can you see the polar bear?