



## Polar Bear

*Ursus maritimus*

**Geographical Range:** Found throughout the shores and islands of the Arctic Ocean, the range of the polar bear has shown significant contraction possibly due to excessive hunting by the whaling fleets.

**Habitat:** The polar bear frequents the ice pack covering the Arctic Ocean, and floating ice searching for food such as seals, fish, and walruses.

**Exhibit Location:** The polar bear exhibit at the Buffalo Zoo is located near the main entrance to the Zoo.

**Physical Characteristics:** The polar bear is covered with a thick coat that is snow white in color. Their skin is black and helps keep the bear warm by absorbing heat from the sun. The polar bear is the second largest carnivorous land animals in the world. The average male weighs 1200 lbs., with females slightly smaller. These bears lead a very secluded life. Adult males and females are solitary except during the mating season. Polar bears have excellent senses of sight, smell, and hearing. They also have a very unpredictable temper.

**Diet:** In the wild, polar bears eat seals, young walruses, fish and carrion. In captivity they receive feline diet, fish, bear biscuits, carrots and apples.

## Did you know?

- Known and hunted by the Eskimos for centuries, whoever finds the bear gets the hide and whoever kills the bear gets the meat. The polar bear is vulnerable to the endangered species list so protection and harvest controls have been put into effect.
- The estimated total world population is 20,000. Intensive hunting began in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by Europeans. The seal hunters reduced polar bear food supply in the former Soviet Union, Greenland and eastern Canada.

**Status:** Numbers stable at this time