# Polar Bears Gain Weight in Rapidly Warming Arctic

## Description

Polar bears in Norway's Svalbard archipelago are gaining weight despite the loss of sea ice, a situation that has scientists concerned about the future. The northern Barents Sea is warming much faster than the global average, causing sea ice to disappear. This has made it harder for bears to find food, as they must now swim longer distances between hunting areas and birthing sites.

Since 2000, the average size and weight of Svalbard's polar bears have increased, surprising researcher Jon Aars from the Norwegian Polar Institute. He notes that while this is positive news, other regions where bears are under severe threat from climate change have much stronger evidence of decline.

Polar bears are spread across twenty populations in the Arctic. Some populations are declining in parts of Alaska and Canada, while others seem stable or even growing. Notably, the Barents Sea population, estimated to have between 1,900 and 3,600 bears, appears stable.

Aars and his team studied 770 bears and found their physical condition improved after 2000. The shrinking sea ice may be helping bears find food more easily, as they hunt seals and exploit new food sources like eggs and reindeer.

However, scientists warn that if sea ice keeps disappearing, it will be very difficult for polar bears to survive in the long term. Aars predicts there will be a limit to how many bears Svalbard can support without adequate ice.



# Vocabulary List:

1. **Archipelago** /ˌɑːrkɪˈpɛləˌgoʊ/ (noun): A group of islands.
2. **Severe** /səˈvɪr/ (adjective): Very great; intense.
3. **Exploiting** /ɪkˈsplɔɪtɪŋ/ (verb): Making full use of and benefiting from a resource.
4. **Condition** /kənˈdɪʃən/ (noun): The state of something especially regarding its appearance quality or working order.
5. **Population** /ˌpɑːpjəˈleɪʃən/ (noun): All the inhabitants of a particular town area or country.
6. **Predicts** /prɪˈdɪkt/ (verb): Says what will happen in the future based on information or evidence.

# Comprehension Questions

**Multiple Choice**

1. What has been happening to the average size and weight of Svalbard's polar bears since 2000?

   Option: Decreasing
   Option: Staying the same
   Option: Increasing
   Option: Fluctuating

2. How is the northern Barents Sea affecting sea ice?

   Option: Causing it to increase
   Option: Causing it to thicken
   Option: Causing it to disappear
   Option: Causing it to move southward

3. What is a significant concern for scientists regarding the situation of polar bears in Svalbard?

   Option: Decreased weight gain
   Option: Increasing sea ice
   Option: Longer swimming distances for food
   Option: Lack of birthing sites



4. How many populations are polar bears spread across in the Arctic?

   Option: 5
   Option: 10
   Option: 20
   Option: 30

5. What new food sources have polar bears been exploiting due to shrinking sea ice?

   Option: Kelp and seaweed
   Option: Fish and crustaceans
   Option: Eggs and reindeer
   Option: Berries and plants

6. What did Aars predict will be a limiting factor for polar bears in Svalbard?

   Option: Hunting regulations
   Option: Food scarcity
   Option: Inadequate ice support
   Option: Temperature increase

**True-False**

7. The average size and weight of Svalbard's polar bears have been decreasing since 2000.

8. The Barents Sea population of polar bears is estimated to be between 1,000 and 2,000 bears.

9. Aars and his team found that the physical condition of 770 bears improved after 2000.

10. Scientists believe that the continued disappearance of sea ice will have no impact on the survival of polar bears in the long term.

11. Polar bears have been struggling to find food due to the increasing sea ice in the Arctic.

12. Aars was surprised to find that the physical condition of Svalbard's polar bears has been declining in recent years.



**Gap-Fill**

13. Since 2000, the average size and weight of Svalbard's polar bears have _____.

14. The Barents Sea population of polar bears is estimated to have between 1,900 and

_____ bears.

15. Aars and his team studied _____ bears to assess their physical condition.

16. Scientists warn that if sea ice keeps disappearing, it will be very difficult for polar bears to survive in the

_____ .

17. Aars predicts there will be a limit to how many bears Svalbard can support without adequate

_____ .

18. The shrinking sea ice may be assisting polar bears in finding food more easily, such as hunting seals

and exploiting new food sources like _____ and reindeer.

## Answer

**Multiple Choice:** 1. Increasing 2. Causing it to disappear 3. Longer swimming distances for food 4. 20 5. Eggs and reindeer 6. Inadequate ice support
**True-False:** 7. False 8. False 9. True 10. False 11. False 12. False
**Gap-Fill:** 13. increased 14. 3,600 15. 770 16. long term 17. ice 18. eggs

**CATEGORY**

1. Sci/Tech - LEVEL3

**POST TAG**

1. climate change
2. ESL learning
3. esl news
4. Level 3
5. polar bears
6. warming

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