



# Polar Bear

Shrinking Ice



by Stephen Person

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[www.polarbearsinternational.org](http://www.polarbearsinternational.org)

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# The Polar Bear Capital

It was early September 2009. **Researcher** BJ Kirschhoffer (KURSH-*hoff*-ur) was in Churchill, Canada, to study polar bears. He'd come to the right place. So many bears live near Churchill that it's known as the polar bear capital of the world!



More than 1,000 polar bears spend part of the year near the town of Churchill.

BJ looked out the window of his **Tundra** Buggy, a huge truck built to travel over snow and ice. “There were bears all over the place,” BJ reported, “but some did not look healthy.” Many of them were skinny. BJ could even see their ribs through their white fur. “I knew that something was very wrong,” he said. These were not well-fed bears.

People come from all over the world to see the bears of Churchill.



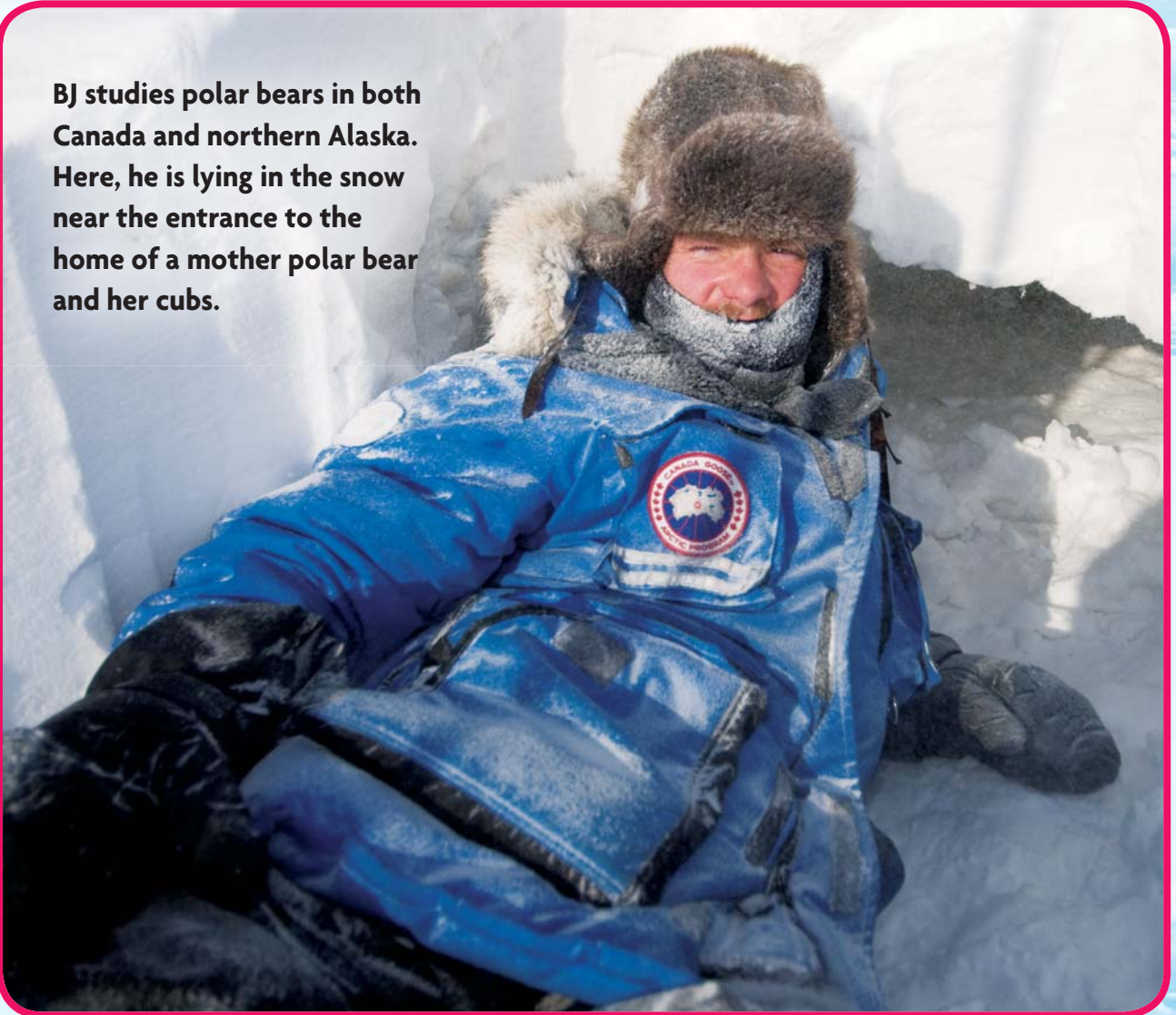
The world polar bear **population** is 20,000 to 25,000. About 60 percent of the bears live in Canada.



# A Freezing Home

To find out more about the skinny bears, BJ turned to Ian Stirling and Andrew Derocher, **biologists** who have been studying the animals for more than 30 years. Ian and Andrew had also noticed changes in the polar bears' weight. Their research on polar bears and their **habitat** helped explain why the animals weren't finding enough food.

**BJ studies polar bears in both Canada and northern Alaska. Here, he is lying in the snow near the entrance to the home of a mother polar bear and her cubs.**





When scientists such as Ian and Andrew study polar bears, they work in the **Arctic region**—the only part of the world where polar bears live. It is also one of the coldest places on Earth. Winter temperatures average  $-29^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-34^{\circ}\text{C}$ ), and northern parts of the Arctic get much colder. To stay warm, the scientists have to put on layer after layer of clothing. Still, they can only stay outside for a few hours. Polar bears, however, are amazing. This freezing world is their home. How do polar bears survive in this kind of **climate**?

## Polar Bears in the Wild



Only five countries have polar bear populations: the United States, Canada, Russia, Norway, and Denmark. The bears of Denmark live in Greenland, which is part of Denmark.

Where polar bears live

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## About the Author

Stephen Person has written many children's books about history, science, and the environment. He lives with his family in Saratoga Springs, New York.



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# Polar Bear

## Shrinking Ice

It was early September 2009. Researcher BJ Kirschhoffer was in Churchill, Canada, to study polar bears. It didn't take long, however, for him to notice that something was wrong. There were bears all over the place, but many did not look healthy. Some were so skinny that BJ could see their ribs through their white fur. Why weren't these bears getting enough food to eat?

Look inside to find out how Arctic researchers solved the mystery of the starving polar bears. You'll also discover how these amazing animals are built to survive in one of the coldest places on Earth, how they hunt and raise their young—and how humans can help save them and their icy habitat.

**Arctic Wolf**  
The High Arctic

**Caribou**  
And Reindeer, Too

**Polar Bear**  
Shrinking Ice

**Sled Dog**  
Powerful Miracle

**Walrus**  
Tusk, Tusk

**Wolverine**  
Super Strong

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