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The Great White Bear: A Natural And Unnatural History Of The Polar Bear



Synopsis

Polar bears are creatures of paradox: They are white bears whose skin is black; massive predators who can walk almost silently; Arctic residents whose major problem is not staying warm, but keeping cool. Fully grown they can measure 10 feet and weigh close to 2,000 pounds, but at birth they are just 20 ounces. Creatures that may wander thousands of miles over the course of a year, they begin life in a snowdrift. Human encounters with these legendary beasts are cause for both excitement and apprehension. Tales throughout history describe the ferocity of polar bear attacks on humans; but human hunting of polar bears has exacted a far larger toll, obliging Arctic nations to try to protect their region's iconic species before it's too late. Now, however, another threat to the polar bears' survival has emerged, one that is steadily removing sea ice and the life it supports. Without this habitat, polar bears cannot exist. The Great White Bear celebrates the story of this unique species. Through a blend of history, both natural and human, through myth and reality and observations both personal and scientific, Kieran Mulvaney masterfully provides a context for readers to consider the polar bear, its history, its life, and its uncertain fate.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I love to take a trip to the polar regions in the heat of the Summer, by book that is. This Summer Kieran Mulvaney was nice enough to escort me on a tour of the Arctic with the particular purpose of learning about and understanding the polar bear in his book The Great White Bear. I always love finding out more about animals and have been interested in polar bears and their welfare, but really wasn't that well informed. It seemed like a great opportunity to read a book about polar bears by a

journalist and environmental activist such as Kieran Mulvaney. I wasn't disappointed as The Great White Bear is easily readable for the non-scientist. One can learn much about the habits, the biology and the impact that the changing arctic landscape has on the polar bear. I was delighted to learn about the hunting habits of this great wandering bear. I found it intriguing to learn that this bear is deliberately slow lest it overheat. That and many other interesting tidbits can be found in this book. Also worth reading are the many "bear stories" and I really liked the ones which were set in Churchill. Here is one which I found entertaining: Next to us sat Bill Callahan, American by birth but a resident of Churchill for twenty-eight years. He, too, had a bear story. Evidently, a community of 800 people is, for Bill somewhat suffocating, so he lives in a cabin outside of town. It makes for plenty of peace and quiet; but he says, "I sometimes get some interesting visitors." One night the previous year, a sow with cubs had pushed through his front door and entered his kitchen while he slept.

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