



## The Mysterious Arctic

Do you wonder how anyone can live in the Arctic? You might be surprised to learn that over 2 million people, and countless other precious species make the Arctic region their home. Its magnificent beauty, incredible wildlife, its native people and its effect on entire planet, make it a place we should learn about and protect.

**It's the Top of the Earth!** Did you know that the ice and snow at the North Pole is not on land? It's floating ice (pack ice) that moves about five miles a day! So, if you're on an ice pack at the location of the North Pole, before you know it, you'll drift away. "When I arrived at the North Pole," explained Will Steger, "I had this sense of being at the top of the planet Earth. I felt alone above a 12,000 foot deep ocean."

**It's Shared!** Eight countries, including U. S., Canada, Iceland, Greenland (Denmark), Norway, Finland, Sweden, and Russia make a circle around the Earth's coldest ocean. The Arctic Ocean and the land that surrounds the **Arctic Circle** is called the Arctic Region.

**It's Cool!** In the Arctic, just like where you live, the strength of the sun's heat and the amount of daylight help determine the temperature. About six months of the year, the Earth's Arctic Region is tilted away from the sun so it is mostly dark and very cold. The average temperature at the North Pole in the winter with 24 hours of darkness is  $-50^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-46^{\circ}\text{C}$ ).



And in the summer, when this region is tilted toward the sun, there is daylight for 24 hours and the average temperature is  $34^{\circ}\text{F}$  ( $-1^{\circ}\text{C}$ ). Even then, the sun is always low on the horizon and doesn't give off much heat.

**It's Home!** The families who live in the Arctic Region think it's the greatest place to live. But to survive, they have to make use of everything around them to live. Sod, stones, driftwood, and even ice were used to build homes. Animals are used for food and clothing. **Most Arctic animals** cannot live anywhere else. Caribou, musk oxen, polar bears, wolves, seals, walrus and whales are just a few of the precious species who need this land and sea to survive.

**It's Polluted!** It's polluted because of the way the rest of the world lives, not by the native people or animals who live in the Arctic. The Earth's water and air currents act like rivers of pollution carrying the rest of the world's bad habits to this Arctic Region. Pesticides used to kill pests on farmers' crops as far away as India or your home, can evaporate into the air and be carried all the way to the North Pole. Factories dumping hazardous waste into water near our homes, are not just hurting us. Water currents will take polluted water all the way up to the Arctic Ocean where Beluga Whales and other marine life live and can be harmed

