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Earth's two polar regions are the coldest places on the planet. The Arctic in the north and the Antarctic in the south experience temperature extremes and seasons during which the sun does not rise. Yet plants and animals make homes in these places.



Maps of the Earth's two polar regions. Left to right: the Arctic and the Antarctic.

In the Arctic, the snowy tundra and forest-filled taiga support myriad species: lumbering musk ox, warm-coated foxes and hares. On the Arctic sea ice, walruses and seals raise their young, and polar bears hunt among the floes.

Indigenous communities have lived among the ecosystems of the Arctic for centuries.

Diverse species of wildlife inhabit the Antarctic, the Earth's coldest and driest continent. Emperor penguins huddle together on the ice, incubating eggs in winters that bring temperatures as low as negative 48 degrees Celsius.

The tiny Arctic tern is the only terrestrial resident of both polar regions, flying 80,000 kilometers every year

round-trip to catch the Antarctic summer before returning to its Arctic breeding grounds.

The seas teem with life in both regions. Similar species of plankton and fish that feed ringed seals in the Arctic and penguins in the Antarctic also support productive commercial fisheries.

These cold places provide us with food and natural resources. They also offer opportunities for international scientific study.

We all benefit from their bounty, their biodiversity and their beauty.



Arctic species:

- 1 Snowy Owl
- 3 Arctic Wolf
- 4 Atlantic Puffin
- 6 Caribou
- 7 Musk Ox
- 8 Arctic Hare
- 9 Polar Bear
- 10 Arctic Fox
- 11 Harp Seal (pup)
- 13 Walrus
- 16 Beluga Whale
- 18 Narwhal
- 19 Arctic Char
- 20 Arctic Sea Jellyfish

Antarctic species:

- 2 Southern Giant Petrel
- 12 Adélie Penguin
- 14 Emperor Penguin and chick
- 15 Icefish
- 21 Antarctic Toothfish

Species that live in both the Arctic and Antarctic:

- 5 Arctic Tern
- 17 Krill