

K-2



Discover Arctic Tundra Animals

Chaperone-Led Field Investigation



Dear Chaperone,

Please guide your students through the following observations. As you ask them the following questions allow them to think about their answers and encourage them to come up with questions of their own. The purpose of this activity is not for them to get all the “right” answers but rather to allow them to practice questioning and observation skills.

Find the polar bears. Why do you think polar bears are white?

Lots of animals that live in the Arctic are white. This helps them to blend in to the ice and snow. Polar bears don't really have predators to hide from (except humans), but being white helps them to sneak up on the animals that they eat (their prey).

Find the Arctic foxes. What do you notice about this fox that would help it to live in the cold Arctic?

It is so cold in the Arctic that most of the ground stays frozen even after some of the snow melts during the summer. Arctic foxes have thick fur to protect them from the cold. They also have small ears, short noses, and short legs. Having smaller body parts makes it easier for them to keep their bodies warm.

What color are the Arctic foxes? Why do you think they are that color?

If you are visiting during the winter months the foxes will have thick white coats to help them to blend into the snow. If you are visiting in the summer, you will notice that the foxes are grey. Their grey coats help them to blend into the tundra when there is no snow on the ground.

Find the reindeer. Do they have antlers?

Both male and female reindeer have antlers. However, at certain times of the year, they lose their antlers. Males usually lose them in early winter and females in spring.

What do you notice about their antlers? Are they all the same? Do they look fuzzy or smooth?

Each reindeer's antlers grow in their own special pattern. Reindeer antlers are dark brown and fuzzy part of the year, but in the fall the fuzz (called velvet) begins to peel off. When all the velvet falls off, the antlers look smooth and are about ready to fall off for the winter. Believe it or not this is normal and does not hurt at all.

Find the musk ox. What kind of animal does the musk ox remind you of? How is it different from that animal? How is it like this animal?

Likely responses may be: cow, bison (buffalo) or even sheep or goat. All of these animals have (split) hooves. They are all grazers and feed on grasses and other plants. Most have horns, although horn size and shape may vary. Musk ox have the thickest hair coats out of these animals because it is very cold where they live in the Arctic tundra. (Their undercoat is 8 times warmer than wool!)

Care Conserve

Connect

Discover