**Sea Ice**

Sea ice is frozen water. It forms, grows and melts in the ocean. Around Antarctica and the Arctic, the sea always has a blanket of ice. The amount of sea ice depends on the season. In the summer, some of it melts and in the winter, more of the sea freezes. With climate change, sea ice is melting more each summer so the amount of sea ice is declining. Sea ice reflects 80 per cent of the sun's light. When sea ice melts this sunlight is no longer reflected and instead warms the sea water, which, in turn, means more sea ice melts.

Arctic sea ice is very important for walruses and polar bears because it forms part of their habitat. When the sea ice begins melting, polar bears are forced to swim long distances between areas of ice. This can prove especially hazardous to their cubs. Melting ice also means that polar bears struggle to find food. Usually polar bears hunt seals by lying in wait next to a hole in the ice sheet. These powerful animals seize seals as they bob up through breathing holes in the ice. In mild winters, bears go hungry because the seals have plenty of water to come to the surface and don't need to use holes within the ice sheet.



















