



KALI: A Polar Bear's Tale

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Chapter Three:

James wiggled through the den's small opening into a larger chamber. Snuggled in the back, he saw a tiny, white, male bear cub.

At birth, nearly four months earlier, he weighed just two pounds and was a helpless, blind, and almost hairless little creature. After months of nursing his mother's rich milk, he'd grown to a roly poly 18 pounds. His eyes were wide open, and a fuzzy, white coat covered his body.



Photo Credit: John Gomes, Alaska Zoo

"I'm not going to hurt you. I'm going to take you home," James said. "Just don't bite me."

James scooped the cub up, holding him tight.

He moved quickly, pulling the tiny cub out of the den's warmth and into the cold. Wrapped in James' arms, the little bear blinked in the weak, Arctic sunlight.

James mounted his snowmobile, cradling the polar bear cub like a puppy. The two men zoomed across the ice. James soon realized the 40 miles to Point Lay was too far for the small cub. His fat reserves were not enough to protect him from the wind chill.

They drove across the tundra and soon pulled up to a hunting cabin. Inside, James found a pair of ski pants. The men tied the legs of the pants together to create a pouch just big enough for a polar bear cub. Snuggled in the windproof polyester, up against James' chest, the cub would be warm enough to make it through the journey. Now sheltered from the wind, the bear dozed as the snowmobile roared across the landscape.

When the men arrived in Point Lay, the villagers were quite surprised by a polar bear cub. "Let's take him to the Police Hall, where he'll be warm and comfortable," James said. The North Slope Borough, the government entity responsible for much of Northern Alaska, was contacted. The government biologists made fast arrangements for the little cub to be flown to the larger town of Barrow the next day.

"He needs a name," James' friend said. "Before he leaves Point Lay."

Ask Zoo Keeper Julie

Do polar bears eat penguins?

Polar bears are only found in the Northern hemisphere/polar region, while penguins are only found in the Southern hemisphere. Polar bears and penguins do not live together.

How many polar bears are there?

It is believed there are about 20,000-25,000 polar bears in the wild. Rapid loss of sea ice is the primary threat to the stability of polar bear populations.

Newspaper Connections

Use the weather map in the newspaper to check the temperature in Alaska and your town. Collect and graph this information over several months and make comparisons.

