

Meal Times

AGE RANGE 5-11 years

LESSON TIME 30 minutes

CURRICULUM LINKS Science, Geography, English, ICT, Art and design.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Polar bears are basically carnivores, however when under stress and when food is scarce, they will eat moss and other vegetation. Carnivores are meat eaters. But because of the problems of global warming, their food supplies are getting less and less so they have to resort to other ways of finding food.

Polar bears eat

- Ringed seals
- Bearded seals
- Walrus
- Dead narwhals (this is a toothed whale with a strange horn on its head)
- Bowhead whales

If they cannot find these, they will eat:

- Reindeer
- Small rodents
- Seabirds
- Eggs
- Fish
- Seaweed
- Berries
- And when they are desperate, human rubbish!

Interesting facts:

- They sometimes hunt their prey by standing motionless by a hole in the ice until a seal appears.
- They are known to wash in between eating a meal.
- Often they do not eat all of the dead animal.
- They will travel and swim long distances to find food.
- They are at the top of the food chain.
- Polar bears are curious animals and will investigate human settlements, including rubbish from bins when they are very hungry.



Elephants are herbivores and eat only plants. African elephants are the biggest land animals in the world and so eat a huge amount. They are known as grazers and browsers, and will eat plants of almost any size from grass up to medium and even small trees.

Grazers feed on grass and low level plants. Browsers eat twigs, shoots, leaves and fruits off bushes and trees. Elephants like to eat fruit.

African elephants will eat

- Grasses
- Roots
- Bark
- Fruit
- Cabbages
- Lettuce
- Sugar cane
- Hay
- Acacia leaves

The diet of the Asian elephant is very similar to that of the African elephant, however it eats more grass than the African elephant which tends to concentrate on leaves.

Interesting facts:

- An adult African elephant can eat up to 130 kgs of food in one day.
- Lots of the food eaten by elephants goes undigested so some smaller animals, such as monkeys, often pick through the dung looking for seeds.
- Elephants are extremely good seed dispersers.
- In Africa and Asia, particularly in Laos, working elephants often don't get enough food because the forests that used to provide food for elephants have changed and are now used for commercial benefits. Because elephants eat a lot, some owners can't afford to buy enough food for them.
- As their habitat shrinks, the elephants have less choice as to what to eat.



Activity

Discuss the difference between carnivores and herbivores. Explain that a creature that normally eats meat and plants is known as an omnivore. Humans are omnivores.

Look at the question sheet provided and talk about the different types of food shown. Ask the children to circle in red the food eaten by polar bears and in green the food eaten by elephants. Alternatively, cut out the images and divide into 'polar bear' and 'elephant' piles.

LOWER

- Get the children to imagine that they are a baby elephant. Talk about the kind of food an elephant eats. Which would they choose as their favourite food and why?
- What are the children's favourite foods and why?
- When might a baby polar bear or elephant get really hungry and why? e.g. after a long walk.

UPPER

- Produce a food chain with the polar bear at the top. Investigate what each creature in the chain eats.
- Discuss how humans might be affecting the food supplies of both polar bears and elephants.

FURTHER IDEAS

- Investigate some creatures that are omnivores.
- If a polar bear had to live where an elephant lives, could it survive?
- If an elephant had to live where a polar bear lives, could it survive?
- How does a polar bear keep warm? Find out more about how a polar bear uses its fat to keep itself alive.
- Produce a collage showing some African or Asian elephants in their correct habitat and some of the other animals that might live with them.

