

Safe and Cold in Antarctica

By Nick Pittman

Without special clothes, do you think you would be able to survive outdoors for a day in the freezing temperatures of the Antarctic? Unless you are a penguin, seal or whale (and if you were, you wouldn't be reading this), then the answer is probably "no."

Way down south, as far south as you can go on the Earth, you will find the Antarctic. It is also known as the South Pole. This frozen land of snow and ice is home to many different species. Each has its own special way of surviving in a place where the temperature rarely climbs above 42° Fahrenheit. The average temperatures in the Antarctic vary, but they have been known to drop to -90° Fahrenheit.

Whales, the largest mammals of all, are able to live in these icy waters because they have blubber, layers of fat underneath their skin that lock in their body heat. **Penguins** survive because their thick feathers, like whale blubber, keep them warm. And **seals** are able to stay alive because of their heat-trapping fur.

In the Antarctic, no animals go hungry. **Penguins** and **seals** both eat large numbers of fish. Penguins can eat over 25 in one day! Whales eat over four tons per day of krill, tiny shrimp-like animals. That's almost as much as two pick-up trucks.



Unlike animals in other habitats, most of the animals of Antarctica are not threatened or endangered. Still, the numbers of some kinds of whales are finally making a comeback (though they are still far from what they were before humans began hunting them). Seals and penguins both have plenty of breeding grounds if humans do not interfere.

But while the animals of the Antarctic are relatively safe, you certainly wouldn't be if you journeyed there without your parka!