



Arctic A-Z

A is for Arctic Circle

- The **Arctic Circle** is an imaginary line that goes around the Earth at latitude $66^{\circ} 33' 44''$ north of the Equator.
- North of the Arctic Circle, there is at least one day each year when the sun does not set and there is 24 hours of daylight. This is referred to as the 'midnight sun'.



B is for Baffin Bay and Baffin Island



- **Baffin Island** is the fifth largest island in the world.
- It has been inhabited by Inuit people for thousands of years. It was named after the English explorer, William Baffin.
- **Baffin Bay** is found between Baffin Island and Greenland.
- The Polar Ocean Challenge (POC) crossed Baffin Bay on their journey around the Arctic Ocean.

C is for climate change



- **Climate change** in the Arctic is caused by the same ordinary, everyday activities that affect the whole planet's climate.
- **Greenhouse gases** produced in other parts of the world have a **big** impact on the climate in the Arctic, causing temperatures to rise more quickly than they should.

D is for David Hempleman-Adams



- David is the founder of **Wicked Weather Watch (WWW)** and has been exploring the Arctic for more than 30 years.
- He has walked, skied and sailed across or around the Arctic and, in 2000, was the first man to fly a balloon over the North Pole.
- He recently completed the **Polar Ocean Challenge** (POC), sailing around the Arctic Ocean in one summer season, to highlight the impact of climate change.

E is for Evenk



Photograph of a traditional Evenk house.
Source: Britannica.com

- The **Evenk** people originate from Russia and are one of over forty different ethnic groups (**indigenous people**) living in the Arctic.
- Other indigenous groups are:
 - **Sami** in areas of Finland, Sweden, Norway and Northwest Russia;
 - **Nenets, Khanty**, Evenk and **Chukchi** in Russia;
 - **Aleut, Yupik** and **Inuit** (Iñupiat) in Alaska;
 - Inuit (Inuvialuit) in Canada;
 - Inuit (Kalaallit) in Greenland.

F is for Finland



- **Finland** is one of eight countries found within the Arctic Circle.
- Other countries that have either part or all of their land area within the Arctic Circle are:
 - **Canada**
 - **Denmark**
 - **Finland**
 - **Iceland**
 - **Norway**
 - **Russia**
 - **Sweden**
 - **United States of America.**

G is for greenhouse gases



- Too many **greenhouse gases** make the air around the Earth hotter and lead to **global warming**.
- **Greenhouse gases**, such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide, are produced from burning **fossil fuels** (coal, oil and natural gas).

H is for heath and heathland



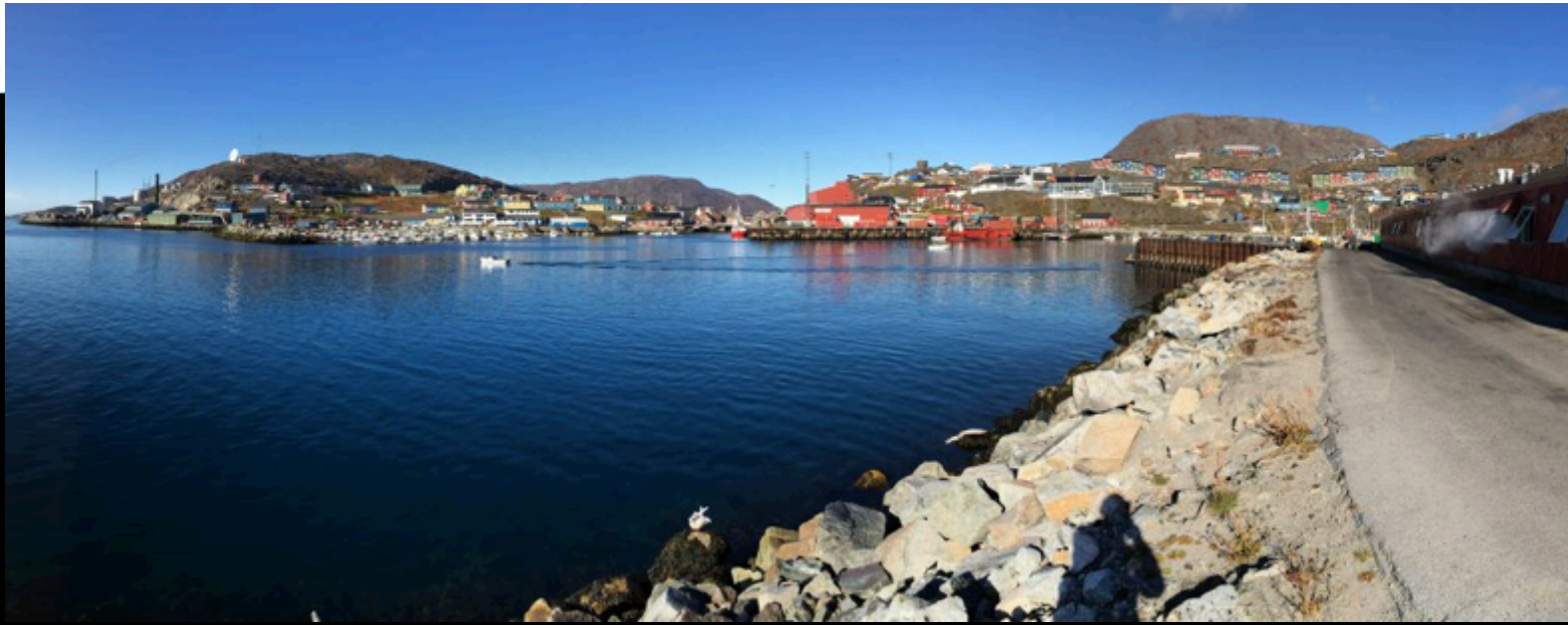
- **Heath** is a type of shrubland habitat, which is made up of low, woody plants.
- Heaths are common throughout the Arctic.

I is for ice



- Many different kinds of ice are found in the Arctic - **icebergs**, **glaciers**, **snow**, **ice floe**, **ice sheets** and **pack ice**, to name just a few!
- Our favourite is **frazil**. This is the name given to **ice crystals**, which exist in very cold water that moves around too much to allow a **sheet of ice** to form.

J is for Julianehåb



- **Julianehåb** is the old name for the town of **Qaqortoq** in Greenland.
- The town was christened Julianehaab after the Danish queen, Juliane Marie.
- The Polar Ocean Challenge (POC) were lucky enough to stop here for one night.

K is for killer whale



- **Killer whales** live mostly where the water is very cold, such as in the Arctic.
- They can also live elsewhere, however, and are the most widespread of all sea creatures.

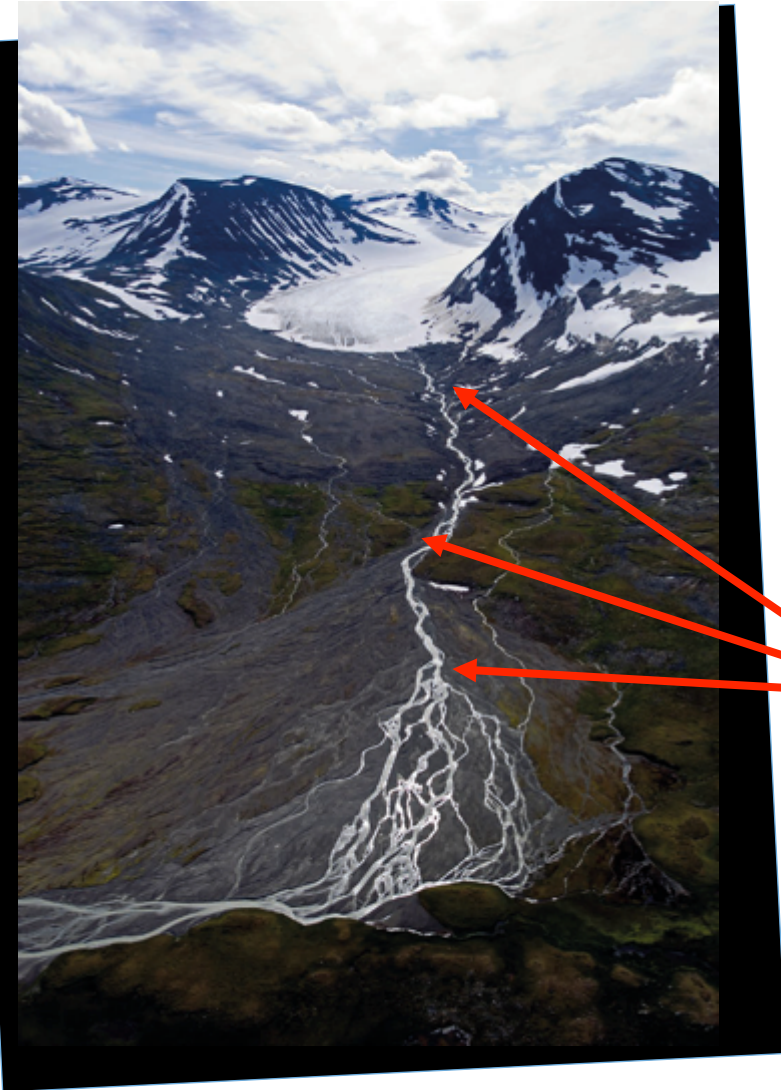
L is for lichen



- There are about 20 000 known types of **lichen**.
- Lichen grow very slowly and can, in fact, live for thousands of years.
- In the Arctic, lichen grow on rocks, soil and trees.
- Lichen forms a major part of the diet of **reindeer** and **caribou**.

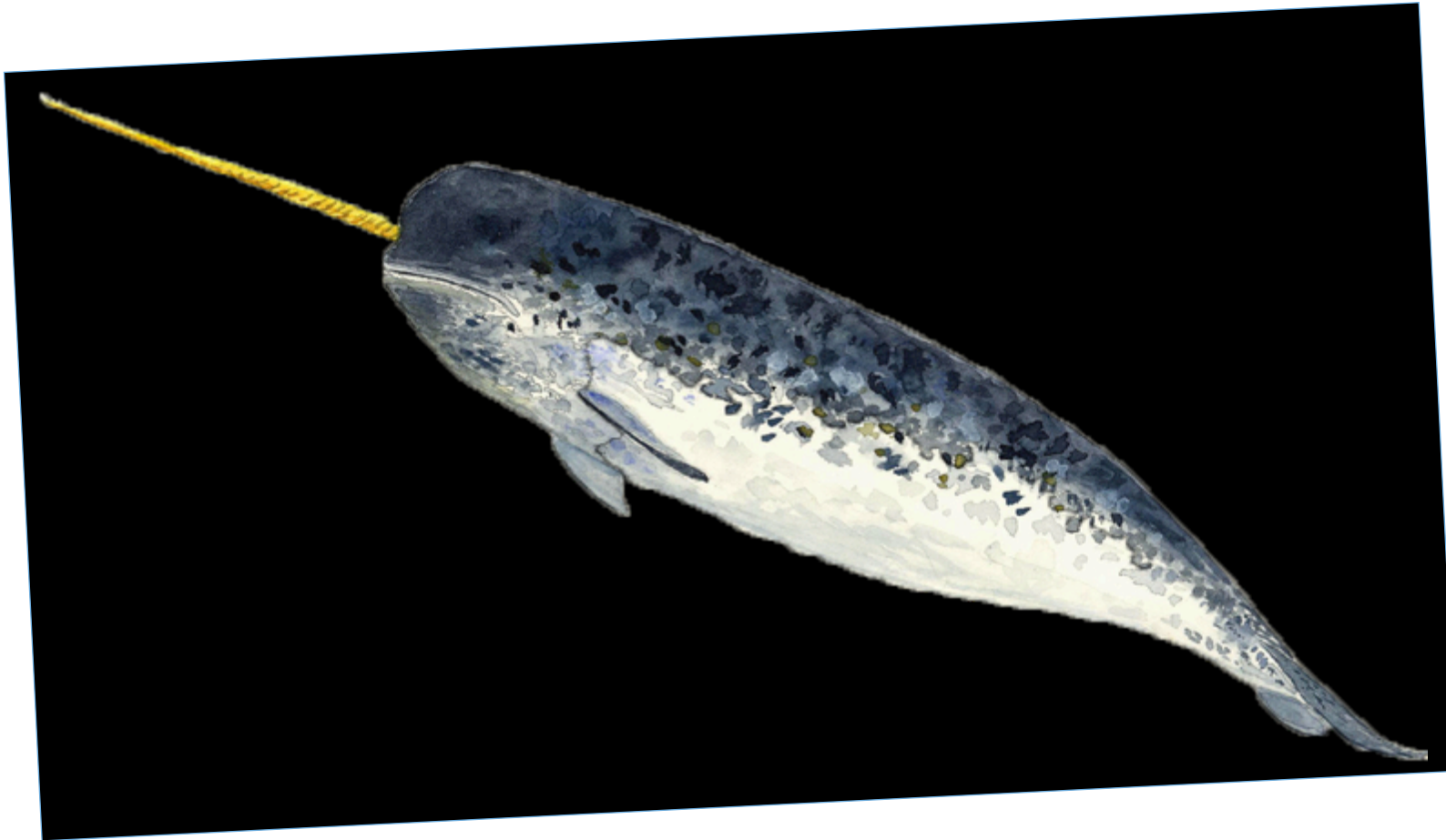
Photograph taken by Katrine Raundrup, courtesy of *Interact* (www.eu-interact.org).

M is for meltwater



- When snow, ice and glaciers melt, the water that trickles from them is called **meltwater**.
- For many people in the Arctic, this meltwater is their main source of water.
- The image opposite shows meltwater streams running off a glacier in Sarek, northern Sweden.

N is for narwhal



- The **narwhal** is known as 'unicorn of the sea'. It is actually a type of porpoise, which is found in Arctic coastal waters and rivers.
- The tusk of the male narwhal may be up to 3.1 m long!

O is for Ocean - the Arctic Ocean



- The **Arctic Ocean** is the smallest and shallowest of the world's five oceans.
- It is unique, because it is almost always covered in ice (**perennial ice cover**).
- **Climate change** is decreasing the amount of ice, especially during the summer months of the year.

P is for polar bear



- **Polar bears** are the largest living **carnivores** (meat eaters) on Earth.
- They are very good swimmers, have an excellent sense of smell and keep themselves clean by rolling in snow!

Q is for Qeqertarsuatsiaat



- **Qeqertarsuatsiaat** is a town near Baffin Bay in Greenland.
- With 17 letters in its name, it is surely one of the longest place names within the Arctic!

R is for ribbon seal



- **Ribbon seals** live in the Arctic and sub-Arctic regions of the North Pacific Ocean.
- They eat mainly fish, but also feed on squid, shrimp and crabs.
- They can live for up to 25 years.
- They may reach up to 1.6 m in length and can weigh up to 95 kg.
- Did you know that ribbon seals are able to stay under water for up to thirty minutes?

S is for snow



Photograph taken by Erika Leslie, courtesy of *Interact*.

- **Snow** is a significant feature of the Arctic environment and has a huge influence on people's way of life.
- The indigenous peoples of the Arctic have many words to describe snow – falling and lying snow are very different – and it is also very important to their culture.

T is for tundra



- **Tundra** is a type of ecosystem where few trees grow due to the low temperatures.
- The word *tundra* comes from the Sami word *tündâr*, which means 'treeless mountain tract'.

Tundra on Bylot Island, Canada.
Photograph taken by Isabelle Laurion, courtesy of *Interact*.

U is for Upernavik



- Upernavik is located in Greenland.
- Climate change is affecting the area:

“These years the global changes in the climate are visible here at Upernavik town. The sea doesn’t freeze up until February or March now. It disappears again in April or May. In the northernmost villages it is different, as the sea freezes around November and uncovers again in June or July.”

V is for volcanoes



- Hot **volcanoes** are not the first thing to spring to mind when we think of the Arctic, one of the coldest places on Earth.
- Iceland, one of the eight countries found within the Arctic Circle, was formed by volcanoes, however.
- It has thirty active volcanic systems.
- In 2010, air travel across Europe was stopped when Eyjafjallajökull (left) erupted and threw a lot of ash into the atmosphere.

W is for walrus



- **Walruses** spend most of their time on land, although they hunt for food in the water.
- The whiskers on either side of their face act as food detectors, locating clams and shellfish on the ocean floor.

X is for Arctic FoX



- The **Arctic Fox** lives in tundra and coastal areas of Alaska as well as in Canada and Europe.
- They are **carnivores** (meat eaters) and are quite small – the size of a household pet.
- When they rest, they curl their tail around their bodies to keep warm.

Y is for Yukon Quest



- The **Yukon Quest** is a 1,000 mile international sled dog race, which begins in Whitehorse, Yukon and finishes in Fairbanks, Alaska.
- The competition started in 1984.
- The route runs on frozen rivers, over four mountains and through remote, northern villages.

Z is for Novoya Zemlya



- **Novoya Zemlya** is an **archipelago** (group of islands) in the Arctic Ocean.
- It is in northern Russia and is the extreme Northeast of Europe.