

Reindeer of the Arctic

Heather Rising



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Contents

What Are Reindeer?	2
Habitat and Food	6
Life Cycle	8
Reindeer and People	12
Reindeer in a Changing Environment . . .	16
Helping Reindeer	20
Glossary	23
Index	24

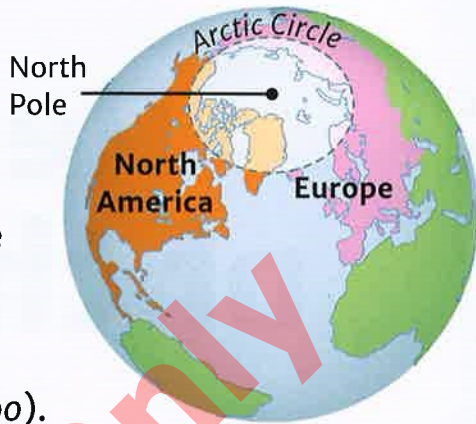
What Are Reindeer?

Reindeer are a kind of deer.

Many reindeer live near the **Arctic Circle** in the northern parts of Europe and North America. In North America, reindeer are called caribou (say: *ca-ri-boo*).

Reindeer live in herds. They can form huge groups of thousands of animals in spring.

These herds **migrate**, or move, thousands of kilometres each year to find food.



The Arctic Circle is the land and sea around the North Pole.



This view from above shows a reindeer herd in the Arctic Circle.

The hair on reindeer can be different colours, from dark brown to grey. The hair of some reindeer changes to white in winter.



The hair of the Peary caribou turns white in winter.

Reindeer have two layers of hair. The layer closest to their skin is soft and fluffy. The layer on the outside is longer and rougher. A reindeer's hair helps to protect it from freezing temperatures.



A reindeer's layers of hair keep it warm.

When standing, a male reindeer is around 1.4 metres high at the shoulder. Males are bigger and heavier than females, and can weigh over 200 kilograms.

Reindeer grow new **antlers** each year.

The antlers can be over a metre tall.

Both male and female reindeer grow antlers.

In other types of deer, only the males grow antlers.



Male reindeer are usually bigger than female reindeer.

Most reindeer have long legs that help them to run well. Their hooves are very wide. This helps reindeer to walk on snow without sinking. Reindeer are good swimmers and can cross large lakes.

They use their hooves like paddles.

Reindeer hooves change with the seasons.

In spring, the hooves are softer to help stop the reindeer from sinking into icy ground as the ice melts.

In winter, the hooves harden so that the reindeer can use them to dig through snow to find food.



The bottom of a reindeer's hoof is shaped like an upside-down letter "U".



Reindeer hooves work like snowshoes. They help the reindeer walk over the top of deep snow.

Reindeer use their hooves to find food under the snow.

Habitat and Food

Reindeer spend the summer months near the Arctic Circle, in an area called the **tundra**.

Only the top 10 centimetres of ground in the tundra melts in summer. The deeper ground stays frozen all year.

This means that trees cannot grow in the tundra.

Only grasses, flowering plants and small bushes grow there.

Reindeer eat the plants that they can find.



Reindeer graze on plants in the tundra.

In winter, reindeer migrate south. Female reindeer lead this migration. The reindeer return to the same place each year – an area where the snow is less deep and there are plenty of plants. They dig down into the snow and scrape moss and **lichens** off rocks to eat. Some herds spend time in the mountains or woodlands where they also eat small trees. Reindeer must keep moving and cover great distances to find enough food. Each reindeer needs to eat about 7 kilograms of food a day. Some herds travel 5000 kilometres a year. Reindeer droppings provide important **nutrients** to the tundra plants in the areas where the reindeer walk.



In winter, reindeer move to areas where there is more food.