Adaptation in the Polar Bear

Adaptation in a population of living things happens as a result of an adaptive trait. This is any inheritable trait that increases it’s survival rate so that it can live longer, reproduce longer, and have more offspring (that also have that trait). Adaptative traits can improve animals find food, make a safer home, escape predators, survive cold or heat or lack of water.

The polar bear has many adaptations for its life on the polar ice pack. Their white fur helps them hide in plain sight. This is a good thing as there are no trees or rocks to hide behind in their habitat. Blending in is the only way to hide. This adaptive trait is a physical adaptation.

They also are one of the only bears that have a totally carnivorous diet. This means that they only eat meat. Most bears are omnivores and do eat plant matter. But where polar bears live, there is almost no plant matter available, so they have adapted a totally carnivorous lifestyle. Their long, sharp claws help them pull seals right out of the water when they surface to breathe and onto the ice where the bears can feed.

Polar bears also have thick blubber and dense fur to help keep them warm. They have big, furry feet, that act like snowshoes to help walk on the snow. These are all physical adaptations that help a polar bear survive in its environment.
For Discussion and Critical Thinking:

The polar bear has adaptive traits that help it survive out on the polar ice cap.
1. Name one of the polar bear’s adaptive traits and how it helps them survive:

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2. Can you think of other animals that live in the Arctic and have adaptive traits? Name two and describe their adaptive traits and how they help them survive.
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   2. __________________________________________________________________________________
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3. If the polar ice caps melt so that the brown tundra is exposed, how will this affect the polar bear?
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4. Do you have any physical traits that help you survive? Discuss one.
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