Bare facts on bear hair follow questions about a recent report of a hybrid between a grizzly bear and a polar bear. A number of our readers have asked us how can we explain the fact that polar bears seem so well designed to live and hunt in a harsh environment filled with ice and snow, if the world was created good and ice and snow were not on earth till after Noah's Flood. The standard evolutionary explanation is polar bears evolved white hair as an adaptation to camouflage them so their prey doesn't see them until it is too late. It has also been claimed that the white hairs act like fibre-optic filaments and convey sunlight to their skin, which is black, to help keep the bear warm. This last suggestion was tested by Daniel Koon, physicist at St. Lawrence University in New York, who obtained some polar bear hair from a New York zoo and measured how much light of different wavelengths could travel through the length of an individual hair. He found that less than 0.001% of light was conveyed through the hairs. Koon's experiment is reported in *Applied Optics*, 37, 3198-3200 (1998).

**Editorial Comment**: The main prey of polar bears is seals, which they catch when the seals come up for air in gaps in the sea ice. Seals would only see a shadow through the ice if they see anything. Being white would not disguise this, so the evolving camouflage story doesn't really make sense. Polar bears are also scavengers and will eat any dead animals and birds they come across, and in the summer they will eat kelp and berries. They don't need to be camouflaged to catch dead things or ambush berries. Polar bears are better explained by the Biblical history of the world, which tells us the world started out good, but has gone bad. Air cavities and lack of melanin are what causes "grey" hairs in aging people and animals. These hairs are actually white. Thus, white hair is produced by loss of function, and is no help to the theory of evolution, but fits with Genesis.

The fibre-optic story was a nice idea, but it must be consigned to an "urban myth" list. It is infra-red light that gives heat from the sun, not visible light, and there isn't enough light of any wavelength in the arctic to a keep a polar bear warm. The reason polar bear hair appears white is that it does not have melanin pigment, plus it has cavities filled with air within the hair shafts which scatter light. After Noah's flood bears and humans spread out through North America and due to degeneration of genes some bears (and humans) lost their ability to make pigment in the hair and became white. But white bears would stand out in green forests and grasslands, and although no other animals would hunt them for food, humans would. Therefore, white bears would be disadvantaged in places where humans live, but could survive in places where humans rarely went as long as they could find food, such as the high Arctic. Thus, white polar bears are the result of degeneration, selection, adaptation and survival of fittest, but not evolution. (Ref. Ursus, ecology, fur)

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## **Bare Facts on Bear Hair**

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