

## THE ARCTIC: HABITATS FOUND NOWHERE ELSE IN THE WORLD

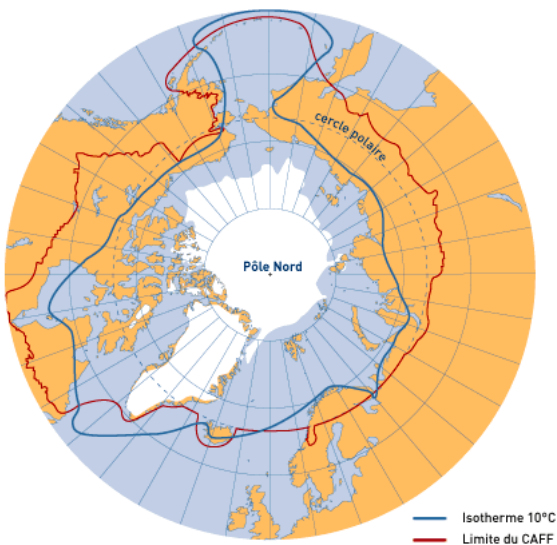
The Arctic includes a variety of habitats – mountains, lakes, rivers, estuaries, ice packs, ocean – but each of them is subject to strong winds and extreme cold as well as a very particular pattern of seasons. Throughout the Arctic, life exists and grows thanks to unique ecological and physiological adaptations that are a fascinating subject of study.

## VERY SPECIAL FORMS OF LIFE

In the Deep North, there are fewer species than in warmer regions (apart from a few plant groups such as willows, and certain birds and insects), but there are often large numbers of individuals present in each case: huge colonies of seabirds, herds of reindeer and groups of lemmings, etc. The flora and fauna of the Arctic are genetically quite varied, and as such they contribute to the biological diversity of planet Earth.

### LIMITE DU CAFF

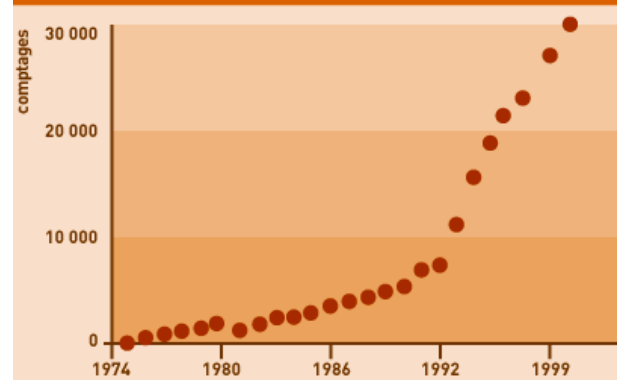
Le CAFF (Conservation de la Flore et de la Faune Arctique), fondé en 1992, est aujourd'hui un des groupes de travail du Conseil Arctique, mis en place quatre ans plus tard par les pays du Grand Nord. Il veille à protéger la biodiversité polaire boréale. Sa zone d'action englobe aussi de vastes étendues subarctiques. (CAFF 2000)



## A FRAGILE MILIEU

Humans and their various activities – fishing, hunting, mining, oil production and now tourism – have been invading the Arctic in increasing numbers for more than a century now. And our presence has had an impact: stocks of some species of fish are diminishing, heavy vehicles have destroyed soil cover, food chains (polar bears, cetaceans, Man) have been polluted, etc. And of course global warming is endangering polar ecosystems.

REMONTÉE DE LA POPULATION DES OIES ALÉOUTIENNES (Branta canadensis) APRÈS L'ÉLIMINATION DES RENARDS. (D'après CAFF 2000)



## CONSERVING OUR NATURAL HERITAGE

A number of initiatives – nature reserves, lists of protected species (whales, seabirds, seals, etc.), international conventions and programmes, fishing quotas – are now under way to try to safeguard the Arctic. After all, the Arctic does not just provide humans with resources (food, energy, medicines, etc.), its magnificent landscapes also satisfy deep emotional needs (arts and crafts, native beliefs, etc.).

ESTIMATION DU NOMBRE DES ESPÈCES ARCTIQUES ET PROPORTIONS PAR RAPPORT AU NOMBRE D'ESPÈCES CONNUES DANS LE MONDE (d'après CAFF 2000).

GRUPE	TOTAL	ARCTIQUE	ARCTIQUE proportion %
Champignons	65 000	5 000	7,6
Lichens	16 000	2 000	12,5
Mousses	10 000	1 100	11
Hépatiques	6 000	180	3
Fougères	12 000	60	0,5
Conifères	550	8	1,2
Plantes à fleurs	270 000	3 000	1,2
Araignées	75 000	1 000	1,2
Insectes	950 000	3 000	0,3
Poissons	25 000	450	1,8
Reptiles	7 400	4	> 0,1
Mammifères	4 630	130	2,8
Oiseaux	9 950	280	2,8