

The Arctic Lowlands

Location

The Arctic Lowlands is a small region that includes numerous islands in the Arctic Ocean and part of the far northern coast of Canada. Parts of Yukon, the Northwest Territories, and Nunavut are also in the region. Most of the Arctic Lowlands region is found north of the Arctic Circle. The Arctic Circle is at a latitude of 63.5°N.

Physical Features

Thousands of years ago, the Arctic Lowlands were covered by glaciers. This period of time was called the Ice Age. The Arctic Lowlands are huge flat areas of rock and boggy plains. The ground below the surface remains frozen all year round. This is called **permafrost**. Only the surface of the ground thaws in the summer. The soil is thin and does not easily grow plants.

Pingos are landforms found in areas of the Arctic Lowlands with permafrost. **Pingos** are rounded hills with a core of solid ice. They slowly grow larger as water freezes onto the ice in the centre of the hill.

Sea ice is ice formed in the saltwater oceans, seas, and straits in the winter. In the summer, the sea ice will melt and break up into floating sheets of ice. These sheets of ice are called **ice floes** and they range in size from a few metres to many kilometres across.

Climate

The Arctic Lowlands region has short, sunny summers with clear skies. In the middle of the summer, the sun does not set. During the long winters, the Arctic Lowlands region is very cold. In the middle of the winter, the sun does not rise above the horizon at all. The Arctic Lowlands region receives very little precipitation. Rainfall is rare during the summer and there is not much snowfall during the winter.

The **Aurora Borealis**, also known as the Northern Lights, can be seen in the Arctic Lowlands region. The Northern Lights are moving broad sheets of colourful light that dance in the dark sky as particles from the Sun enter Earth's atmosphere.

Vegetation

- The Arctic Lowlands consists of many large areas of tundra.
- Only small scattered flowering plants, low-growing shrubs, and mosses grow.
- Some places in the Arctic Lowlands are barren and have very few plants.

Wildlife

- marine life such as whales, seals, and walrus
- mammals such as wolves, polar bears, and arctic foxes
- birds in the summer such as loons, snow geese, and snowy owls

Natural Resources

- coal
- soapstone
- lead and zinc
- oil and natural gas



SEAL

Think About It: The Arctic Lowlands

1. Which parts of northern Canada do the Arctic Lowlands include?

2. What covered the Arctic Lowlands thousands of years ago? Circle the answer.

- A. polar bears B. glaciers C. snow D. explorers

3. What is permafrost? Circle the answer.

- A. ground that is frozen year round B. water that is frozen year round

4. What are pingos? Circle the answer.

- A. large ice cubes B. ice floes C. rounded hills with a solid ice core

5. Sea ice melts and breaks up into floating sheets of ice called....

- A. ice toes B. ice crows C. ice floes

6. What does the sun do in mid-summer and mid-winter in the Arctic Lowlands?

Mid-summer: _____

Mid-winter: _____

7. Name the three types of plants that grow in the Arctic Lowlands.

8. Name six types of animals that live in the Arctic Lowlands.

9. Name three types of natural resources found in the Arctic Lowlands.
