The Review Review

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE

Peter Aird

East Quay Medical Centre, East Quay, Bridgwater,
TA6 4GP, UK.

E-mail: peteaird@tiscali.co.uk

health as the source of their happiness to something bigger and better — something really worth living for.

Then we might see an increase in health flow from a reduced concern about health.

Peter Aird,

GP Principal, East Quay Medical Centre, East Quay,
Bridgwater.

Provenance

Freely submitted; not externally peer reviewed.

DOI: 10.3399/bjgp12X649223

REFERENCE

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ICE BEAR

KIERAN MULVANEY

Arrow, Random House, 2012
PB, 272 pp, £9.99, 9780099534129

In the 11th century, Earl Siward of Northumbria, graced with an ursine nose, believed himself to be descended from a bear. And folk tales abound of bears changing into humans, humans becoming bears, and females marrying bears.

More seriously, scientists have spent decades studying *Ursus maritimus*, lumbering creature of the ice. Good swimmers that prey mainly on ring seals, polar bears are top predators, large, smart, and powerful. Occasionally their tracks meet ours. Appalling Arctic temperatures, ships marooned in ice, and inadequate supplies were not the only hazards encountered by early 17th century European explorers.

In the small town of Churchill, on Hudson Bay's western shore, there's a neighbourly policy of keeping vehicle and domestic doors unlocked at night — just in case silent yet hungry polar bears don't see *Homo sapiens* as close relatives. Churchill's holding facility keeps those strays which return repeatedly secure, until a 30-mile helicopter trip can deliver them to another site. But big bears mean big business. In October and November, some 12 000 tourists visit Churchill.

Scientist Kieran Mulvaney's paperback explains how, following 40 million years of evolution, polar bears are incredibly well-insulated against the rigours of the Arctic environment, they also possess the biggest paws in the bear family: 12 inches diameter. Fastidious for the sake of future offspring, a pregnant female searches carefully for the best site to overwinter; usually two cubs share her 5' x 5' x 3' den from November to March. Surprisingly, during this period, she neither eats nor drinks, while her cubs are

ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE

Neil Richardson

Broad Lea House, Bradley Business Park, Dyson
Wood Way, Bradley, Huddersfield, HD2 1GN, UK.

E-mail: Neil.Richardson@kirklees.nhs.uk

nourished from rich reserves of 35%-fat milk; and to keep the den tidy she will quickly bury their waste.

With stories and research findings which overlap history, geography, and biology, this handy size illustrated text should appeal to students and lay readers interested in the natural world.

Neil Richardson,

Administrator, NHS Kirklees, Huddersfield.

DOI 10.3399/bjgp12X649232