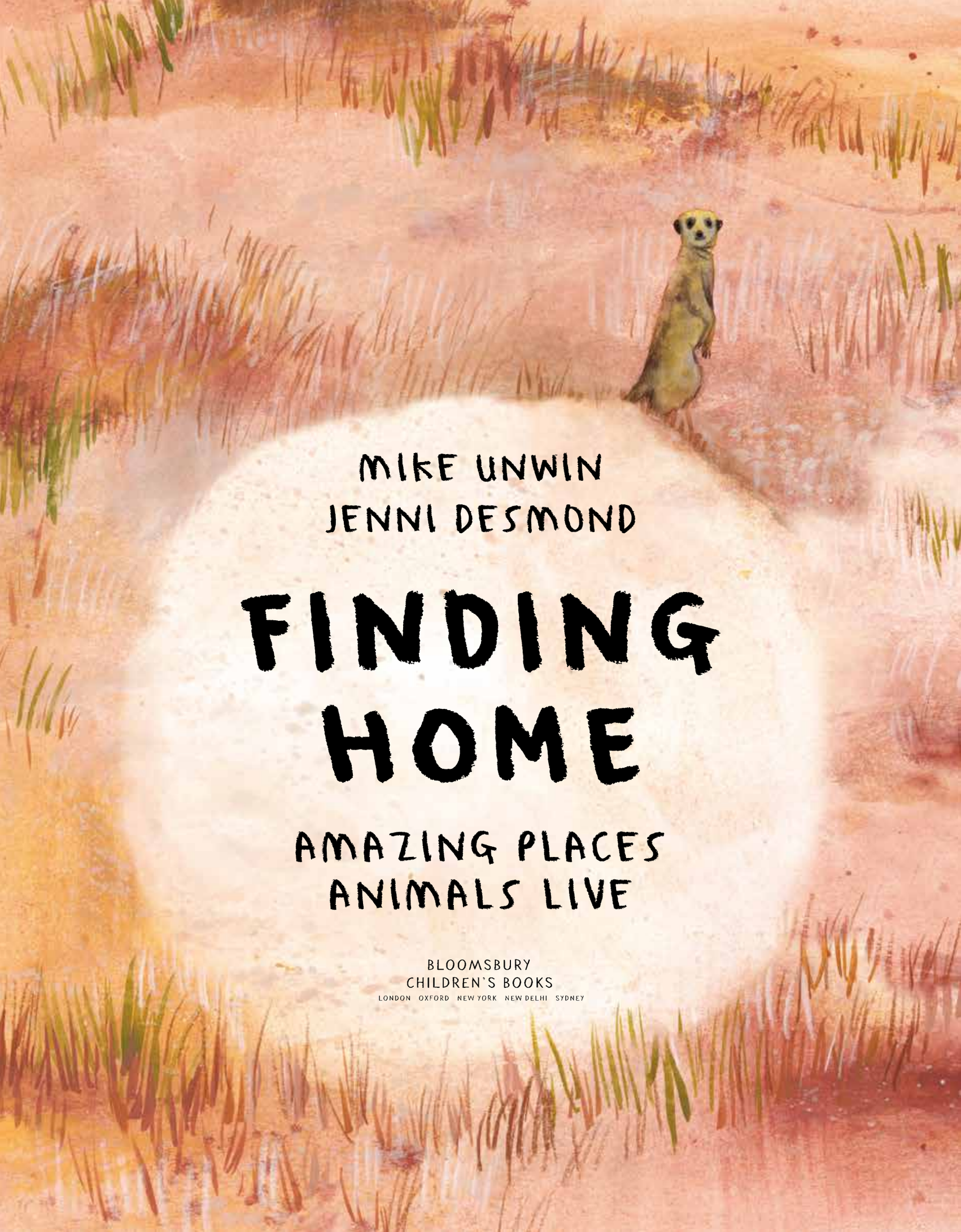


MIKE UNWIN
JENNI DESMOND

FINDING HOME

AMAZING PLACES ANIMALS LIVE

BLOOMSBURY
CHILDREN'S BOOKS
LONDON OXFORD NEW YORK NEW DELHI SYDNEY



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A SAFE PLACE TO LIVE

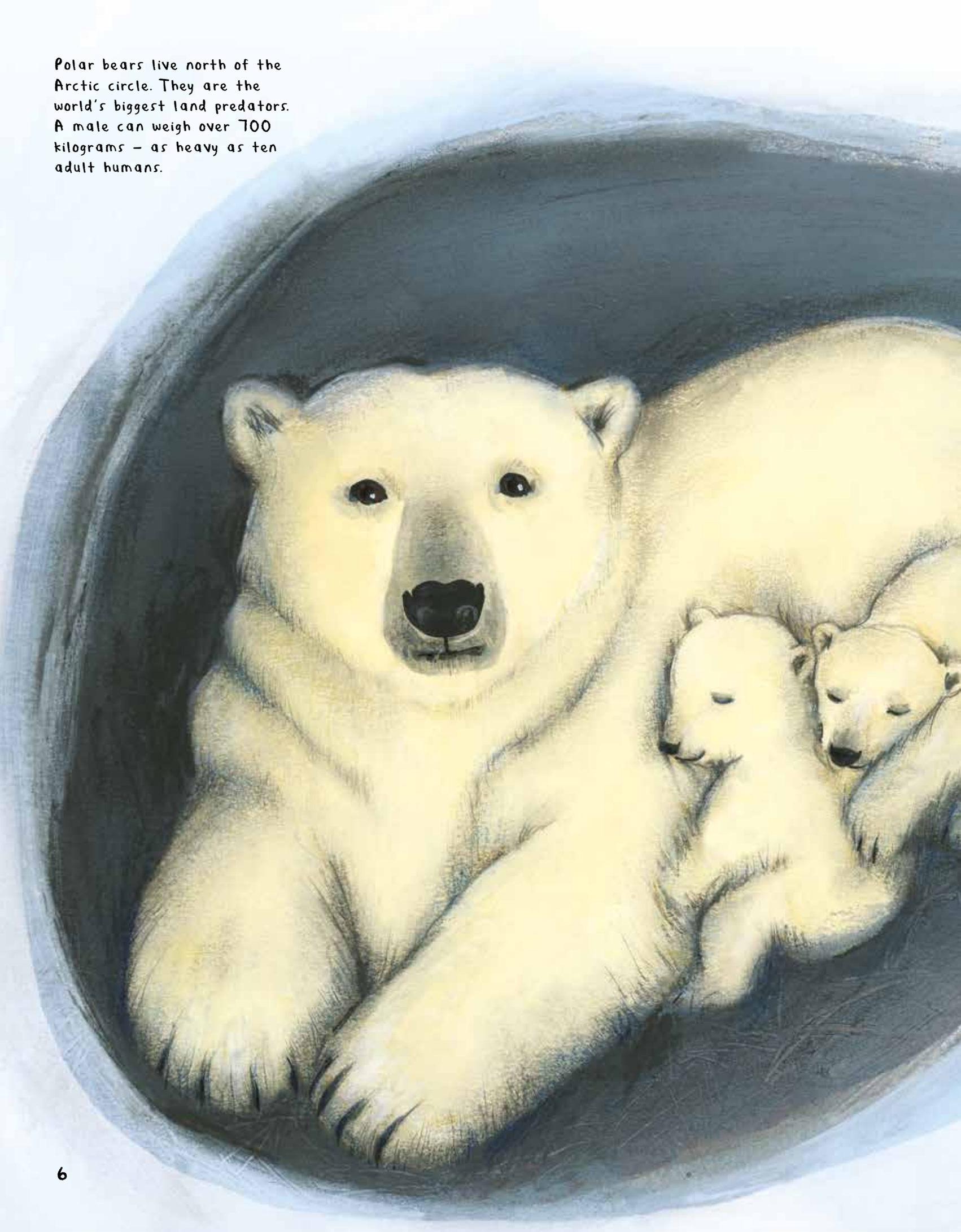
If you could have any home you wanted, what would you choose? Perhaps a treetop castle with a fantastic view, like an eagle's nest. Or maybe a snug underground hideaway, like a meerkat's burrow. Maybe you'd like to share your home with loads of people, like bats in a cave. Or perhaps you'd prefer a place to yourself, like a hermit crab in its shell house for one.

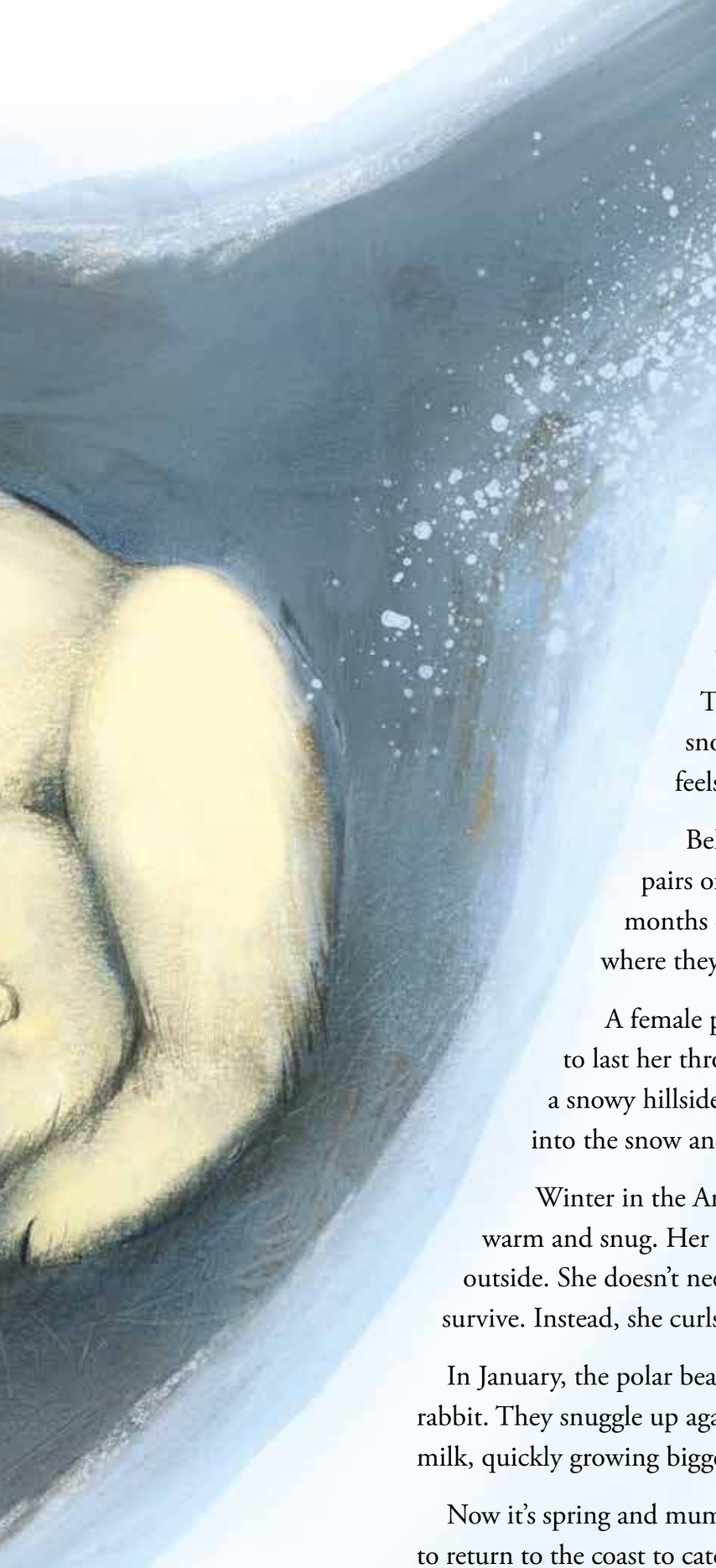
For animals, home can mean many different things. Some live in one place all their lives, like sociable weavers in their huge nest made of grass. Others just stay somewhere for a while, like polar bears in their snow den. Many find a home that has been ready-made by nature, such as a hole in a tree or a cave. Others construct their own, using materials such as grass, sticks, mud and home-made paper. A few animals even find a home on another animal.

Animals' homes serve many purposes. They can be places to lay eggs, raise babies, hide from danger, keep warm, take a quick nap or even sleep for the whole winter. But all have one thing common: home is where an animal feels safe. This book explores the homes of 20 different animals around the world. Take a peek inside – you might get a surprise!



Polar bears live north of the Arctic circle. They are the world's biggest land predators. A male can weigh over 700 kilograms – as heavy as ten adult humans.





SNOW DEN
POLAR BEAR

It's a sunny March morning in the Arctic. Deep under a snowdrift, something seems to be moving. You can hear digging.

Suddenly, out pops a shiny black nose. It's a polar bear! She pushes her head free and takes a deep breath. Then she heaves out her big, furry body and shakes off the snow. She hasn't been outside since October. The fresh air feels good!

Behind her, out pop two more noses – tiny ones – and two pairs of black button eyes. Cubs! These babies are already two months old, but this is the first time they've left the cosy den where they were born.

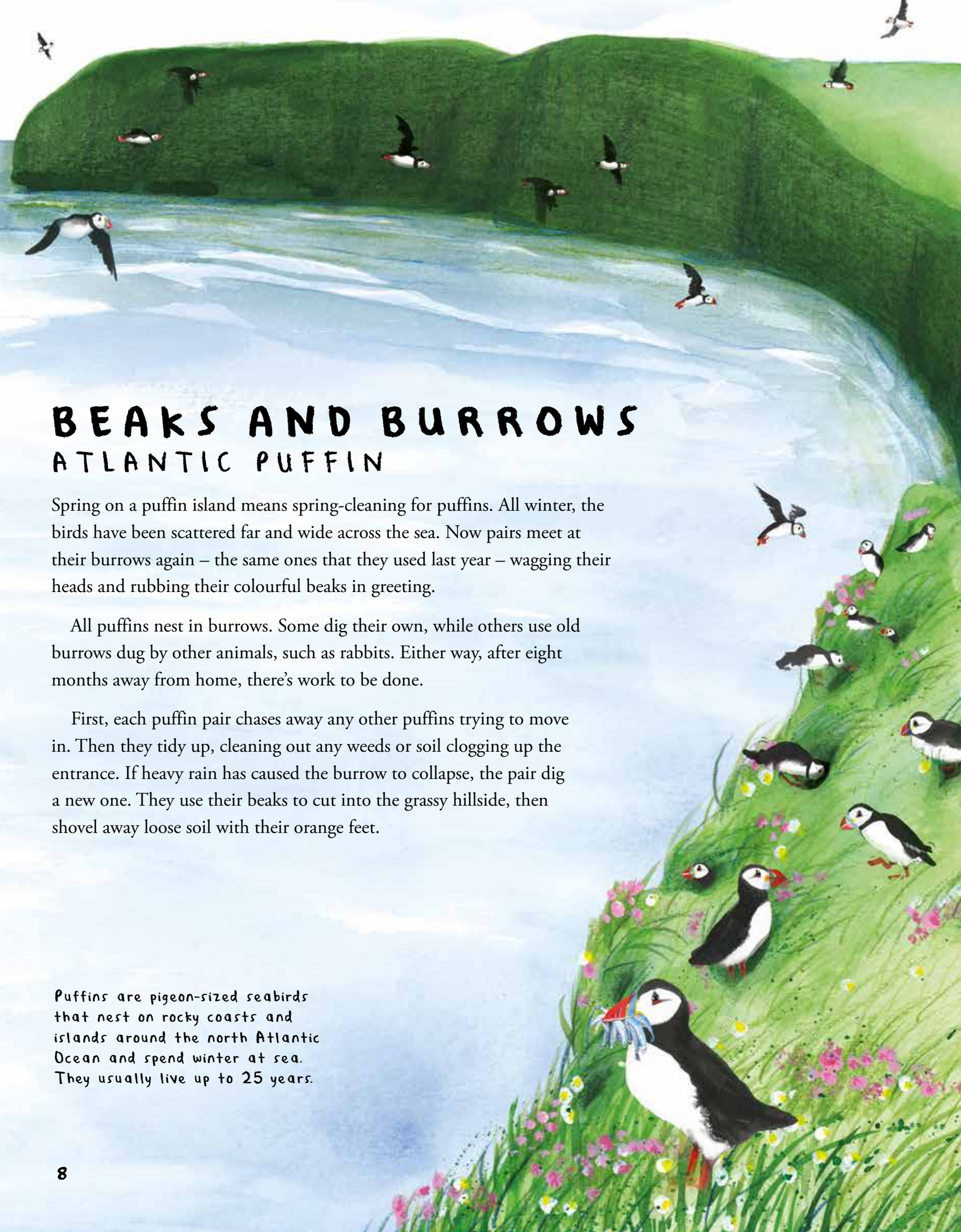
A female polar bear hunts seals all summer, putting on enough fat to last her through winter. Then, in autumn, she travels inland to find a snowy hillside where she can make her den. She digs a narrow tunnel into the snow and scoops out a chamber big enough to curl up inside.

Winter in the Arctic is dark and cold. But inside her den, the bear is warm and snug. Her thick fur keeps the temperature 25°C warmer than outside. She doesn't need to eat: the fat she built up in the summer helps her survive. Instead, she curls up to save energy. She knows her babies are on the way.

In January, the polar bear gives birth to two tiny cubs, each no bigger than a rabbit. They snuggle up against their warm mum and suckle her rich, nutritious milk, quickly growing bigger and stronger.

Now it's spring and mum is hungry. She hasn't eaten for five months! She needs to return to the coast to catch more seals – and this time she must take her cubs with her. For a few days, she lets them play. Then they all set off together. There's a long journey ahead, and lots to learn.

Beneath all that pale fur, a polar bear's skin is black.



BEAKS AND BURROWS

ATLANTIC PUFFIN

Spring on a puffin island means spring-cleaning for puffins. All winter, the birds have been scattered far and wide across the sea. Now pairs meet at their burrows again – the same ones that they used last year – wagging their heads and rubbing their colourful beaks in greeting.

All puffins nest in burrows. Some dig their own, while others use old burrows dug by other animals, such as rabbits. Either way, after eight months away from home, there's work to be done.

First, each puffin pair chases away any other puffins trying to move in. Then they tidy up, cleaning out any weeds or soil clogging up the entrance. If heavy rain has caused the burrow to collapse, the pair dig a new one. They use their beaks to cut into the grassy hillside, then shovel away loose soil with their orange feet.

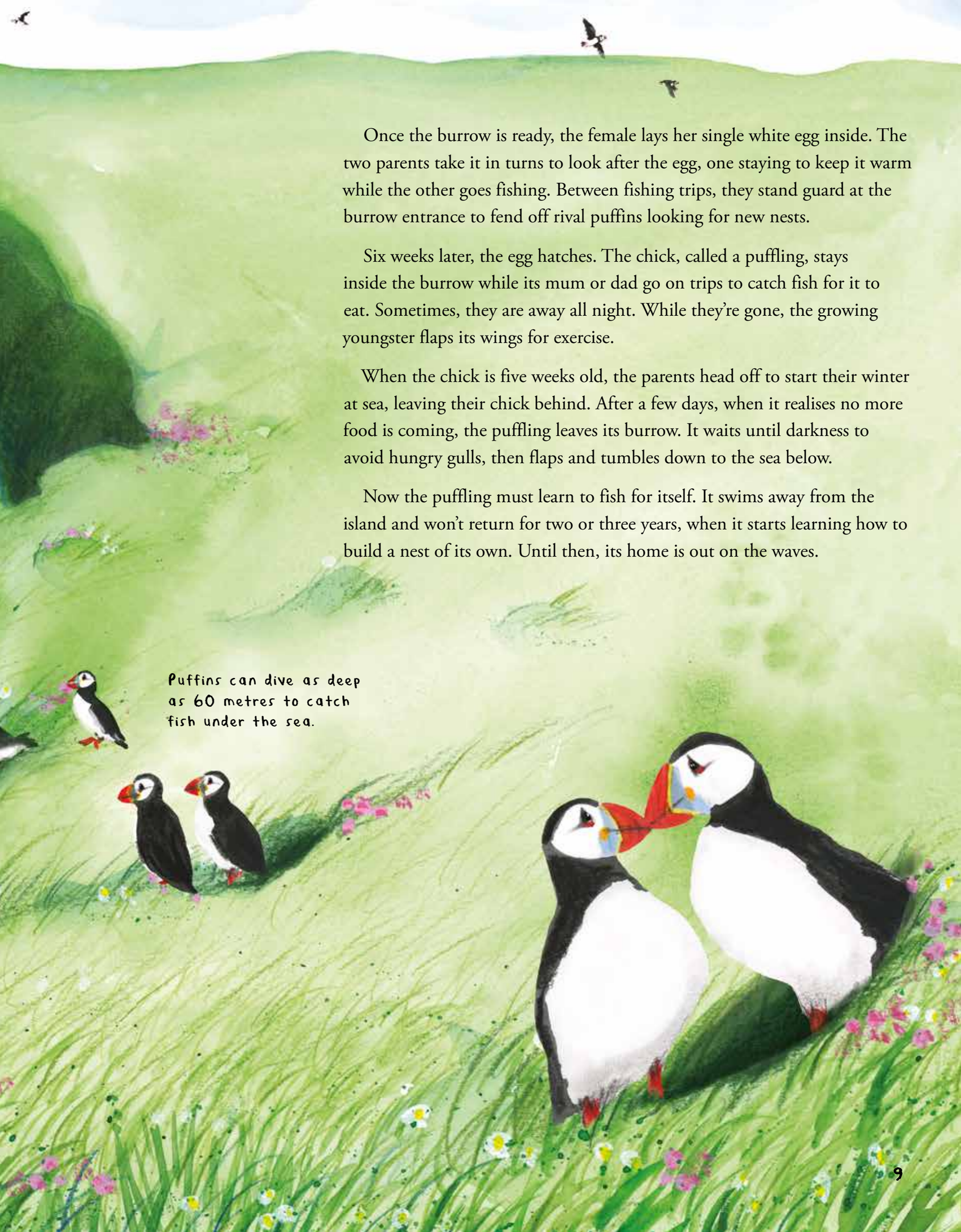
Puffins are pigeon-sized seabirds that nest on rocky coasts and islands around the north Atlantic Ocean and spend winter at sea. They usually live up to 25 years.

Once the burrow is ready, the female lays her single white egg inside. The two parents take it in turns to look after the egg, one staying to keep it warm while the other goes fishing. Between fishing trips, they stand guard at the burrow entrance to fend off rival puffins looking for new nests.

Six weeks later, the egg hatches. The chick, called a puffling, stays inside the burrow while its mum or dad go on trips to catch fish for it to eat. Sometimes, they are away all night. While they're gone, the growing youngster flaps its wings for exercise.

When the chick is five weeks old, the parents head off to start their winter at sea, leaving their chick behind. After a few days, when it realises no more food is coming, the puffling leaves its burrow. It waits until darkness to avoid hungry gulls, then flaps and tumbles down to the sea below.

Now the puffling must learn to fish for itself. It swims away from the island and won't return for two or three years, when it starts learning how to build a nest of its own. Until then, its home is out on the waves.



Puffins can dive as deep as 60 metres to catch fish under the sea.