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FROM LITTLE TO BIG

THE LIFE CYCLE OF THE REINDEER

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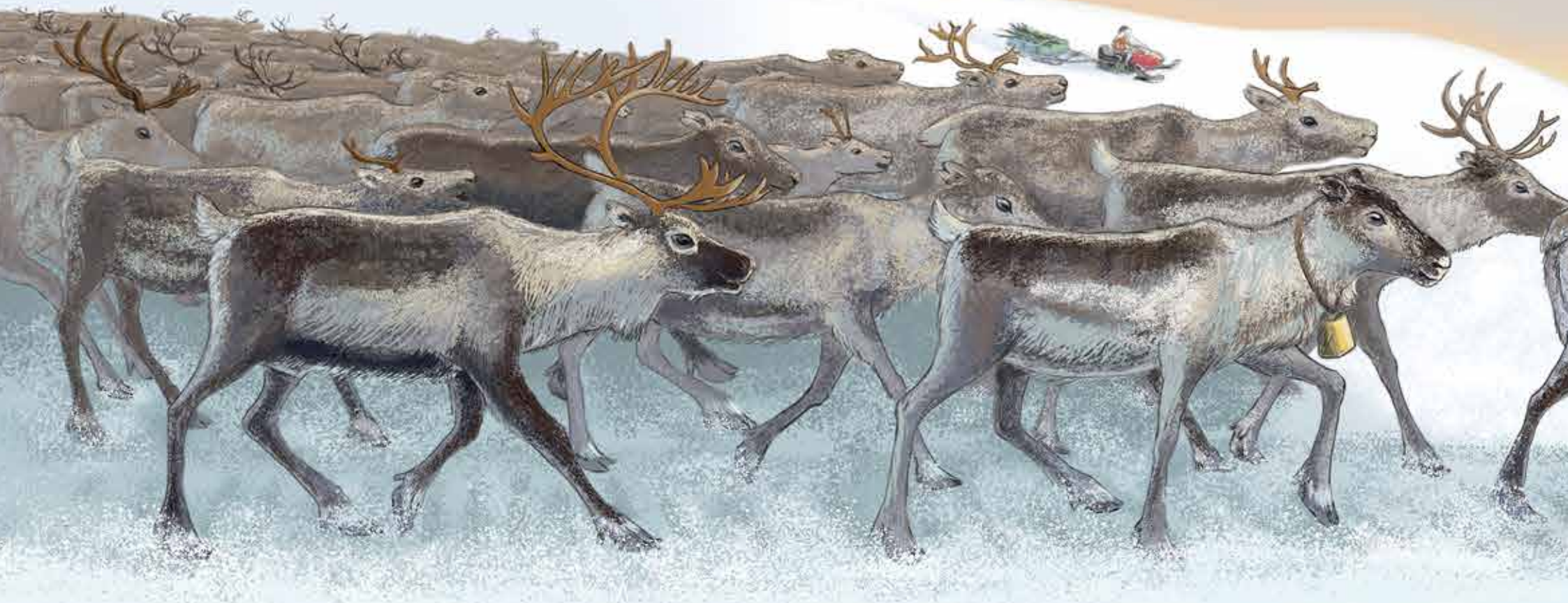
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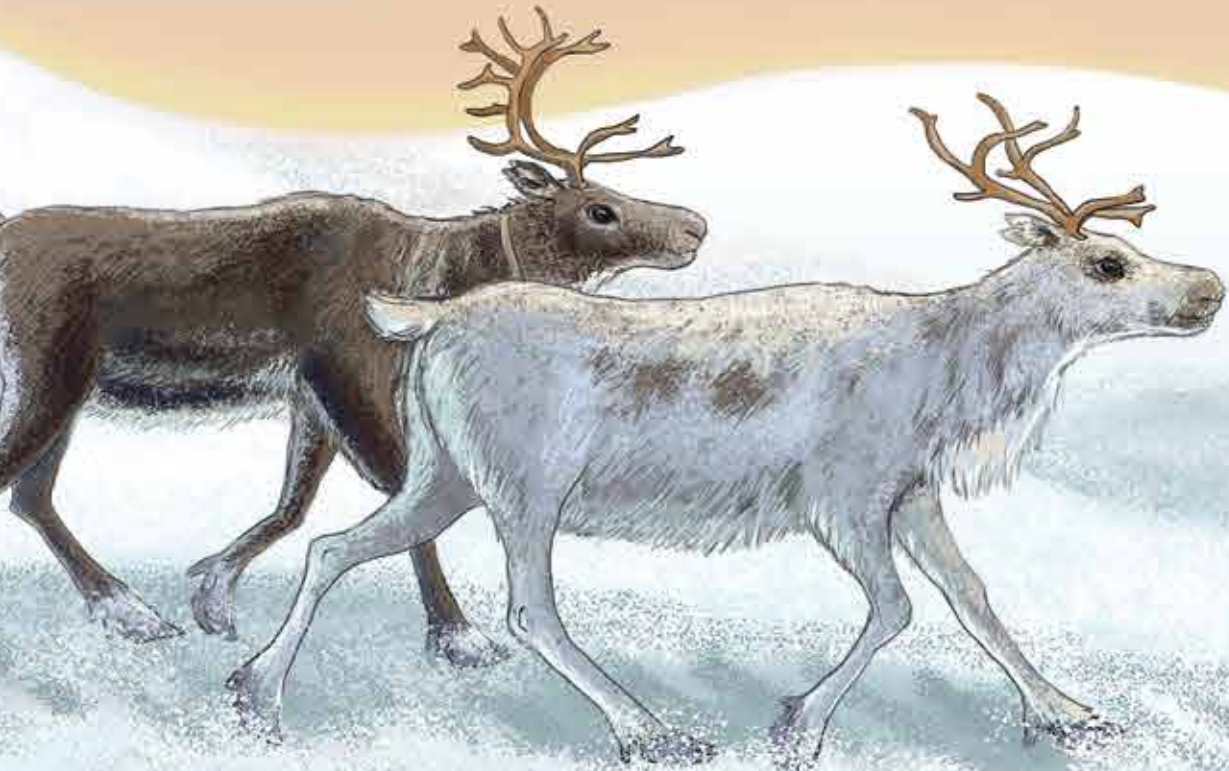
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THIS STORY IS ABOUT A REINDEER CALF, HOW IT
COPEES AND WHAT IT EXPERIENCES DURING A REINDEER
HERDING YEAR.





In the far, far north where it's snowy, frosty, cold, and bright all day, a reindeer herd was making its way to the spring and summer pastures. The reindeer were moving in line and next to each other, and the heavily pregnant females at the front were desperate to find the calving grounds where many reindeer calves would be born. At the front of the flock was a female who trotted along the migration path in the exact same place they went each year. There was also a light-colored, pregnant female at the front who was about to give birth, and who was incredibly impatient because she was in such a hurry to get to the calving grounds. There were also males, last year's calves, and other kinds of reindeer in the flock. The Sámi language has many different names for the different types of reindeer, based on things like age, color, and gender.



Last year's calves weren't quite as strong and stayed at the back of the herd. People had to tie some of the animals' legs to the sled and transport them for part of the journey to be able to keep up with the flock! Some of the females and driving reindeer had bells; this is because the rest of the herd followed the "bell reindeer", helping them stay together. One beautiful, bright night, the herd finally made it to the calving grounds. They had been journeying for many days and rested only briefly and ate very little before continuing onward. In the spring, the pregnant females get restless when last year's calves keep their mothers from going north and they have to rush to get to the calving grounds.



A light-colored pregnant female birthed a white calf onto a bare patch of earth. The light-colored pregnant female – who was now just a normal female – licked the calf until it was clean and dry. When pregnant females give birth to a calf, they quickly eat all of the afterbirth so no wild animals smell the scent of blood and come to eat the calf. The new mother helped the calf to its feet as soon as it was dried off so it could drink warm milk from its mother and gain the strength it needed to avoid being eaten by wild animals. Females normally only give birth to one calf, but they sometimes give birth to two on rare occasions. During the calving time, the females of the flock should be left in peace so they don't get spooked and abandon their calves. The females are particularly nervous and on guard during calving time, when they have a calf to protect.





Time passed, the snow melted and revealed more and more bare earth, and there were a lot of new calves in the flock: completely white ones, light ones, yellow-grey ones, black ones, and patterned ones. By now, a snow-white calf was already quite well-developed and had gotten so fast that its mother almost couldn't keep up with it! The white calf competed with other calves and had also started eating plants such as dwarf birch, grass, and other things that grew from the earth.



The calf watched what its mother ate, which is how it learned to eat plants. The female had shed her horns when the calf was born and was now starting to grow new ones. The white calf's mother was a bit tired by spring since she had a calf to feed, but she grazed well to be able to nourish her calf. It was important to get fat again before fall came and it started to snow again. Then, it wouldn't be as easy to find food when the grass withered and the animals had to dig beneath the snow to graze.



The calf was just about to doze off one day when its mother suddenly came to wake it up. She had spotted an animal sneaking up on the calf! “That animal is a wolverine, and it’s a terribly dangerous animal! It could eat you. Get up! We have to run as fast as we possibly can,” the mother urged her calf. The calf got up and ran after its mother as fast as its little feet could manage. The calf saw that the whole herd was fleeing and that the wolverine was chasing after them. The calf ran as fast as it could over the slushy river and the wolverine wasn’t able to catch it or its mother. Suddenly, the mother stopped. The calf had gotten so tired and weary that it could barely breathe. The whole herd stopped when they realized the wolverine had eaten one of their own. “This is a very, very dangerous animal. You need to be wary of it because it often tries to eat us,” the mother repeated to her calf. “It’s a dark brown animal with a bushy tail and short legs, and it can run for a long time. This is one of the reindeer’s greatest enemies,” the mother said. The calf saw that the wolverine didn’t look the same as the fox.

