

OUR INCREDIBLE WORLD **INCREDIBLE SPECIES** NEWSLETTER

Polar Bears Threatened

Did you know? There are only about 20,000-25,000 polar bears in the world. Canada's Arctic is home to over 60% of them.



Photo: Stephen Testart

Polar Problems

In the Arctic, climate change is causing a loss of sea ice. You may be wondering, "Who needs ice?" Well, polar bears need sea ice to hunt. They use ice floes (floating masses of ice) as platforms from which to hunt their favourite food, seals.

Strange but True

Polar Bears sometimes have a little tantrum if a seal gets away from them. They will throw chunks of ice, slap the ground and kick snow.

Feast or Fast

Have you ever eaten a large pizza all by yourself? That's a feast! Have you ever forgotten to eat breakfast *and* forgotten your lunch money all on the same day? That's a fast.

Polar bears feast in the winter and fast in the summer. When the ice melts in summer the bears move onto dry land where there is very little to eat. In the past, this wasn't a problem because the bears were able to store enormous amounts of fat over the winter to help them survive the summer. However, scientists have noticed that today's polar bears are about 90 kilos (200 pounds) lighter at the end of the summer than they were 15 years ago. Scientists believe it's because the summer fasting time is getting longer and the winter feasting time is getting shorter.

Loss of sea ice is currently the greatest threat to the polar bear's ability to survive.

What is Being Done?

In September 2009 the Ontario government changed the polar bear's status to "threatened". (A species listed as "threatened" is one that is "likely to become endangered if steps are not taken to address factors threatening it".)

To learn how species are assessed as "at risk" in Ontario, check out this site:

<http://www.mnr.gov.on.ca/en/Business/Species/2ColumnSubPage/244543.html>.

A Park for Bears

To help protect polar bears, the Ontario government created [Polar Bear Provincial Park](#). You won't find any play structures or snack bars at this park! In fact, very few humans ever visit the park. Why? It's located in the far north of Ontario, on the western shore of Hudson Bay and about the only way into the park is by plane!

There is a plan underway to protect more areas for the polar bears over the next 10 to 15 years.

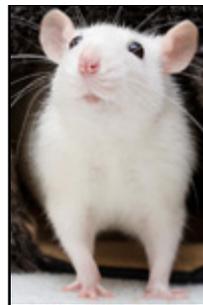


Photo: Rob Fay

Measuring Up

What species begins life at about the size of a rat but grows to be the largest predator on land?

That's right – the polar bear.

Average adult male weight 550 kilos (1200 pounds) **Average adult female weight** 300 kilos (660 pounds)



Mother and Cubs

Photo: Polar Bears International

The Coolest Camp in the World

Have you ever dreamed of seeing a polar bear in the wild? Every year, Polar Bears International's Leadership Camp gives top students from around the world the chance to observe polar bears in their natural habitat.

PBI's 2008 Leadership Camp Participants Churchill, Manitoba



Students gain an understanding of the impact climate change is having on polar bears.

Photo: Polar Bears International

The students are truly passionate about polar bears and use their daily blogs from the trip to spread the message that our help is needed: The bears' sea ice habitat must be saved!



Frontiers North's Tundra Buggy® Lodge, the ultimate arctic home away from home, provides the best views of wild polar bears imaginable!

Photo: © Richard Day/Daybreak Imagery

"I will never forget the way I woke up this morning....I was jolted awake to the screech of "POLAR BEAR!" I looked out from my small bunk window, and there, only a couple yards away, was a gigantic male polar bear tramping towards the Tundra Buggy Lodge."

Alicia Valencia/USA - 2008 Leadership Camp participant



Photo: BJ Kirschhoffer/polarbearsinternational.org



Photo: BJ Kirschhoffer/polarbearsinternational.org

"No one can go screaming 'Save The Polar Bears' and expect everyone else to listen. I am only a teenager from Down Under, and I won't change the world in one swift, magnificent move....But I can help others realise where they could improve their lifestyles, and make them more sustainable".

Julien Rosendahl/Australia – 2008 Leadership Camp participant

"...we need to go to sleep. Tomorrow we have to get up at 6:30am cook breakfast, ride a helicopter, visit a bear den, host two more video conferences, practice and present our chapters from Impacts of a Warming Climate, and plan the most fabulous last supper PBI 2008 has ever seen!"

Ruth Sangalang/Canada – 2008 Leadership Camp participant



Photo: BJ Kirschhoffer/polarbearsinternational.org

Learn more about PBI's Leadership Camp and read the complete blogs of past participants at:

<http://www.polarbearsinternational.org/leadership-camp/>



Get The Facts

Scientific name: Ursus maritimus ("sea bear")

Class: mammal

Average Lifespan in the Wild: 15-25 yrs

Camouflage: The bears' white coat provides excellent camouflage in the snow. Underneath their white coats, polar bears have dark skin.

Insulation: With 2 thick layers of fur and a massive layer of blubber, the polar bear has no trouble staying warm. In fact, this bear can easily get overheated!

Baby Bears: In the fall pregnant polar bears build dens in the snow. Mothers emerge in the spring with their cubs. The youngsters stay with their mothers for approximately 2.5 years.

Predators: Polar bears have no predators other than humans.



Go to <http://www.incredibleworld.ca> to find out more about amazing species and their habitats.

