

Summary of the Federal Addition to the National Polar Bear Management Plan

Under the *Species at Risk Act* (SARA), a management plan must be developed for each species listed as Special Concern in order to identify measures for the conservation of the species. This document highlights the key sections of the draft management plan.

Species Conservation Status

The Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*) is listed as Special Concern under SARA (since 2011). In Nunavut, polar bear is not listed under the *Nunavut Wildlife Act*.

Description and Distribution

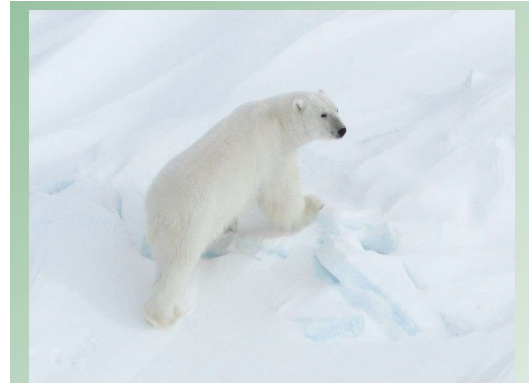
The Polar Bear is a large carnivorous mammal that inhabits both terrestrial and marine areas and occurs in Canada, Greenland, Norway (Svalbard), Russia, and the United States. Polar Bears are apex predators and they occupy the highest trophic levels in Arctic marine ecosystems.

Canada is home to approximately 16,000 of the estimated 20,000 – 26,000 Polar Bears found throughout the circumpolar Arctic. For management purposes, the Canadian Polar Bear population is divided into 14 subpopulations, and the global Polar Bear population is divided into 19 subpopulations (see below map). In Canada, Polar Bears live in Yukon, the Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Manitoba, Ontario, Québec, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Habitat Needs

Polar Bears rely on both marine (sea ice) and terrestrial habitat to meet their life history requirements. Their range encompasses regions where sea ice melts completely each summer (known as annual sea ice); areas where sea ice forms along the shore and then retreats during the summer, but remains offshore; and areas where locally formed or

transported ice remains year-round (known as convergent or archipelago sea ice).



Polar Bear © David McGeachy

Threats to the Species' Survival

- **Climate Change:** Sea ice habitat loss resulting from increased atmospheric temperatures caused by global greenhouse gas emissions
- **Biological Resource Use:** While the number of Polar Bears harvested each year is typically sustainable, if harvest and other sources of human-induced mortality are not properly managed, this may lead to population declines
- **Pollution:** Apex predators, including Polar Bears, are often exposed to high levels of pollutants that bioaccumulate in the marine food web
- **Energy Production and Mining:** Oil and gas drilling, and fuel spills have the potential for mortality and disturbance of Polar Bears
- **Transportation and Service Corridors:** Increasing levels of shipping in the Arctic has the potential to disturb and displace Polar Bears



- **Human Intrusions and Disturbance:** More research is needed before the impacts of tourism on Polar Bears can be accurately assessed
- **Invasive Species:** New species and diseases with the potential to impact Polar Bears may enter Arctic ecosystems due to climate change
- **Natural System Modifications:** Some concerns exist regarding the impact of potential biotic and abiotic ecosystem changes on Polar Bears

Management Objective

Maintain the resilience, redundancy and representation of the population in the species' known range in Canada.

Strategies to Help Meet Objectives

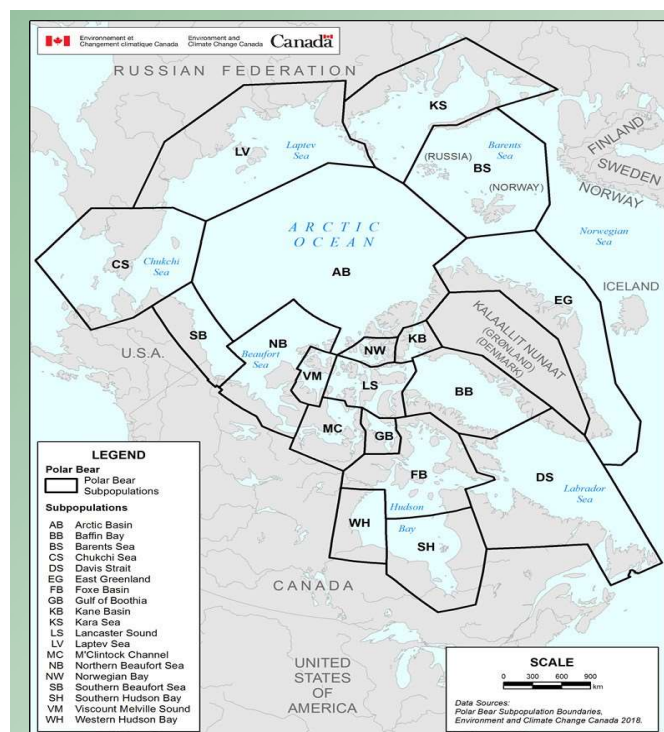
Broad strategies to address the threats to the survival and recovery of the species include:

- Conserving and managing Polar Bear and its habitat in Canada through actions such as supporting the development and communication of policy, programs and guidelines that manage threats and conserve and enhance Polar Bears and their habitat, particularly areas subject to habitat loss due to climate change;
- Cooperating with international partners to conserve and manage Polar Bear and its habitat on a global scale through actions such as supporting and participating in international Polar Bear conservation, research and monitoring initiatives (e.g. the implementation of the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears, and the Circumpolar Action Plan (2015 – 2025))
- Conducting scientific and Indigenous Knowledge monitoring and research with a focus on the following priorities:
 - Habitat and climate change,
 - Population assessment,
 - Genetics and health,
 - Foraging ecology and ecosystem dynamics, and
 - Indigenous Knowledge and local perspectives of Polar Bears, seals, and Arctic marine ecosystems

- Promoting and supporting public outreach and education on matters related to Polar Bear management and conservation in Canada

How You Can Help

- Learn more about the Polar Bear, and the threats to its survival and its habitat needs at www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/species-risk-public-registry.html
- If you live in a community where polar bears are known to occur, follow best management practices to minimize human-polar bear conflicts. For example, ensuring attractants, such as garbage, are managed appropriately



The 19 global subpopulations of Polar Bear. Source: Environment and Climate Change Canada. Available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/environment-climate-change/services/biodiversity/maps-sub-populations-polar-bears-protected.html>

For more information, please contact us directly at:

Environment and Climate Change Canada (ECCC) – Canadian Wildlife Service,
National Capital Region

351 Boulevard Saint-Joseph, Gatineau QC, J8Y 3Z5

Email: ec.planificationduretablissement-recoveryplanning.ec@canada.ca

You can also visit the following website for more information:

Species at Risk Public Registry (www.sararegistry.gc.ca)

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