



Enter Red List search term(s) [GO] [OTHER SEARCH OPTIONS] [Discover more]

Home > Ursus maritimus (Polar Bear)



Ursus maritimus

Scope: Global

Download supplementary material

Table with 10 columns: Not Evaluated, Least Concern, Vulnerable, Endangered, Critically Endangered, Extinct in the Wild, Extinct. Row 1: NE, LC, VU, EN, CR, EW, EX. Row 2: NE, LC, VU, EN, CR, EW, EX.

Summary | Classification Schemes | Images & External Links | Bibliography | Full Account

Taxonomy | Assessment Information | Geographic Range | Population | Habitat and Ecology | Use and Trade | Threats | Conservation Actions

Taxonomy (top)

Taxonomy table with fields: Kingdom (Eukaryota), Animalia (Chordata), Mammalia (Carnivora), Ursidae (Ursus), Scientific Name (Ursus maritimus), Species Authority (Phipps, 1774), Regional Assessments (Europe), Common Name(s) (English - Polar Bear, French - ours polaire, Spanish - oso polar), Synonym(s) (Thalictroce maritimus), Taxonomic Source(s) (Wilson, D.E. 1976), Taxonomic Notes (Phipps (1774) first described the Polar Bear as a distinct species...)

Assessment Information (top)

Assessment Information table: Red List Category & Criteria: Vulnerable A3c,vw3.1; Year Published: 2015-2017; Date Assessed: 2015-08-27; Assessor(s): Wiig, O., Amstrup, S., Alwood, J., Loefer, K., Lunn, N., Obbard, J., Reghe, E. & Thiemann, G.; Reviewer(s): Rondinini, C.; Contributor(s): Akçaya, H.R., Holmes, E., Reynolds, J., Stern, H., Schliebe, S. & Derocher, A.E.; Justification: Loss of Arctic sea ice due to climate change is the most serious threat to Polar Bears throughout their circumpolar range... Our analyses highlight the potential for large reductions in the total Polar Bear population on sea-ice loss continues, which is forecast by climate models and other studies (PFCG 2013)...

Geographic Range (top)

Geographic Range table: Range Description: Polar Bears live throughout the ice-covered waters of the circumpolar Arctic (Obbard et al. 2010, www.pbsa.polar.no). Although some occur in the permanent multi-year pack ice... Countries: Native: Canada (Labrador, Manitoba, Newfoundland & Labrador, Nunavut, Northwest Territories, Yukon), Greenland, Norway, Russian Federation (Krasnoyarsk, North European Russia, West Siberia, Yakutia), Svalbard and Jan Mayen, United States (Alaska); FAO Marine Fishing Areas: Arctic Sea, Atlantic - northeast Atlantic - northwest Pacific - northeast Pacific - northwest; Estimated area of occupancy (AOO) - km2: 24000000; Extreme fluctuations in area of occupancy (AOO): No; Range Map: Click here to open the map viewer and explore the range.

Population (top)

Population table: Population: At present, 19 subpopulation units of Polar Bears are recognized by the Polar Bear Specialist Group (PBSG) of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) (Obbard et al. 2010). Genetic studies have shown that gene flow occurs among the various subpopulations... Current Population Trend: Unknown; Additional data: Extreme fluctuations: No; No. of Subpopulations: 19; Extreme fluctuations in subpopulations: No; Additional data: Extreme fluctuations in subpopulations: No; No. of individuals in one subpopulation: No.

Habitat and Ecology (top)

Habitat and Ecology table: Habitat and Ecology: Polar Bears occur at low densities throughout the circumpolar Arctic and are more abundant in ice-free waters... The Polar Bear is a K-selected species with late sexual maturity, small litter size, high maternal investment and high adult survival... Systems: Terrestrial, Marine; Generation Length (years): 9.8-13.6, 11.5; Movement patterns: Nomadic.

Use and Trade (top)

Use and Trade table: Use and Trade: The US, Canada, and Greenland allow and manage a subsistence harvest of Polar Bears; harvest is prohibited in Norway and Russia... Annual legal harvest of Polar Bears is between 700 and 800 or 3-4% of the estimated size of the total population of about 20-25,000 animals... Polar Bear based tourism, including public viewing and photography is increasing... Polar Bear products are in trade. The range of different products and units of measure used for subsistence makes it difficult to relate to a standard number of polar bears and to export of Polar Bear products from Canada... Polar Bear products are in trade. The range of different products and units of measure used for subsistence makes it difficult to relate to a standard number of polar bears and to export of Polar Bear products from Canada...

Threats (top)

Threats table: Major Threats: Anthropogenic and natural changes in Arctic environments, as well as recognition of the shortcomings of our knowledge of Polar Bear ecology, are increasing the challenges for Polar Bear conservation and management... The warming climate has been associated with an increase in pathogens in other Arctic marine and terrestrial organisms... Persistent organic pollutants, which reach Arctic regions via long range transport by air and ocean currents as well as river run off, also increase uncertainty for the welfare of polar bears... Many of the contaminants are lipophilic and bond tightly to lipophilic tissues. Polar bears are particularly vulnerable to organochlorines because they eat a fat rich diet...

Conservation Actions (top)

Conservation Actions table: Conservation Actions: Conservation actions for Polar Bears vary by jurisdiction and detailed information can be found on the Conservation of Polar Bears (COPB) website... In light of the growing concern over Polar Bear conservation in relation to climate change and a number of other issues, such as oil- and gas activities, shipping and tourism, the five Parties have agreed to initiate a process that would lead to a coordinated approach to conservation and management strategies for Polar Bears... The Parties recognize that Article IV of the Agreement calls for all Parties to conduct national research programs to assess the impact of harvest on both contracting Parties... It is important that population estimates and projections are based on substantiated scientific data... Human caused habitat change and increasing human-bear interactions also must be incorporated into polar bear population projections... The PBSG regards the 1973 Agreement as the cornerstone and basis for any action plan on Polar Bears...

Citation:

Wiig, O., Amstrup, S., Alwood, J., Loefer, K., Lunn, N., Obbard, J., Reghe, E. & Thiemann, G. 2015. Ursus maritimus. The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Version 3.1. Available from: www.iucnredlist.org. Downloaded on 19 November 2015.

Disclaimer:

To make use of this information, please check the Terms of Use.

Feedback:

If you see any errors or have any questions or suggestions on what is shown on this page, please provide us with feedback so that we can correct or extend the information provided.