



Conservation through research and education

## Overview

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Polar Bears International (PBI) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the worldwide conservation of the polar bear and its habitat through research and education. We provide scientific resources and information on polar bears and their habitat to all interested parties.

PBI works closely with the Toronto Zoo as part of our network of Arctic Ambassador Centers. The centers, which were formed in alliance with the San Diego Zoo, focus on polar bear research, education, and animal well-being. They are located in more than 40 zoos worldwide, with an outreach to millions of zoo visitors.

## The Toronto Zoo, one of PBI's Gold Star Arctic Ambassador Centers, takes part in such activities as:

### Leadership Camp

Every fall, top students from around the world gather on the tundra near Churchill, Manitoba, to attend PBI's Leadership Camp, which is designed to help educate teens about polar bears and the issues they face—and to inspire them to return to their communities to make a difference. Last year, the Toronto Zoo sent a student to PBI's Leadership Camp. This year, the Zoo is sending two representatives to our first-ever Keeper Camp. On their return, the keepers will help carry our message to an even wider audience.

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## **Project Polar Bear**

Teams of teens from across Canada and the U.S. participate in this PBI contest, which challenges teams of students to develop community projects that will reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. As an Arctic Ambassador Center, the Toronto Zoo is one of the facilities through which teams can register.

## **Research Projects**

The Toronto Zoo is participating in PBI's olfactory study, a zoo-based research effort that will assess the ability of polar bears to distinguish between the sex, age, and reproductive condition of other polar bears based on olfactory clues. The study will add to our understanding of the polar bear's behavioral and ecological needs and may be important in the management of wild polar bears.

## **Animal Well-Being**

The Toronto Zoo's new exhibit well exceeds the Manitoba Standards for polar bear husbandry, ensuring that their polar bears receive excellent care both physically and on an enrichment level.

## **PBI's Sustainability Alliance**

Dr. Bill Rapley of the Toronto Zoo serves as an advisor to our Sustainability Alliance, an ad hoc group that is developing a set of contingency plans to help management authorities assist polar bears in a warming Arctic.

## **Educational Outreach**

The Toronto programs help educate the public about the importance of reducing carbon emissions to save polar bear habitat. The Zoo also plays a leadership role in the community in terms of promoting a green lifestyle.

To help celebrate the opening of the Tundra Trek, **PBI Spokesperson Chantal Kreviazuk** will make an appearance to help raise awareness about polar bears and the problems they face. The singer visited Churchill for two consecutive years in the fall to see the bears first hand. Her song, "What If It All Means Something?" expresses her concern for polar bears and the melting sea ice.

## **Why Focus on Polar Bears?**

Polar bears serve as the canary in the coal mine in terms of climate change. Sea ice loss in the Arctic is threatening their survival. Polar bears depend on the ice as a platform from which to hunt seals, the mainstay of their diet. They also rely on sea ice for breeding and denning. Scientists now predict that two-thirds of the world's polar bears could vanish by 2040 if current warming trends continue.

## **How Does PBI Help?**

Although polar bears are in trouble, the situation is not irreversible—and PBI is taking a three-pronged approach to saving the bears. First, PBI works with the world's leading polar bear scientists to gather data needed to make sound management decisions. For example, PBI supports the global Polar Population Project, which is helping scientists pinpoint the geographic pockets where polar bears might survive as the sea-ice diminishes. Second, PBI's wide range of educational programs *inspire*, *inform*, and *empower* people to make a difference by reducing carbon emissions and motivating others to do the same. Finally, members of PBI's Polar Bear Sustainability Alliance have developed a set of contingency plans to assist management authorities in a rapidly warming Arctic.

As PBI's President Robert Buchanan says, "There are three kinds of people in the world: those who make change happen, those who watch change happen, and those who ask what happened. Be one of those who make change."