

2021 Report

IUCN SSC Polar Bear Specialist Group



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NUMBER OF MEMBERS
34

SOCIAL MEDIA AND WEBSITE
Website: <https://www.iucn-pbsg.org>

Mission statement

The mission of the IUCN SSC Polar Bear Specialist Group (PBSG) is to coordinate, synthesise and distribute scientific information necessary to guide the long-term viability of polar bears and their habitats.

Projected impact 2021–2025

The Polar Bear (*Ursus maritimus*) is currently classified as Vulnerable (VU) on the basis of a projected reduction in global population size due to loss of sea ice habitat. Loss of Arctic sea ice due to climate change is the most serious threat to Polar Bears throughout their circumpolar range, but action to mitigate this threat is beyond the ability of either the PBSG or the five governments that comprise the Polar Bear Range States. The continued commitment of the Polar Bear Range States to the implementation of its 2015 *Circumpolar Action Plan: Conservation Strategy for Polar Bears* is critical to help secure the long-term persistence of Polar Bears in the wild that represent the genetic, behavioural and ecological diversity of the species. The PBSG considers periodic updated assessments of the

status and trends of the world's 19 recognised subpopulations, identification of areas of essential habitat for Polar Bears, and further understanding and refining of definitions of sustainable harvest of polar bears to be important pieces to be considered by the Polar Bear Range States. During the current quadrennium, we would expect continued actions identified under the 2015 Circumpolar Action Plan to be taken by the responsible authorities and that the PBSG would continue to provide technical advice and scientific oversight where appropriate.

Targets 2021–2025

ASSESS

T-003 Assess the status/trend of all 19 currently recognised subpopulations.

PLAN

T-006 Provide to the five governments comprising the Polar Bear Range States, assessment and advice with respect to essential habitat, sustainable harvest, and climate change communications as part of the Range States Circumpolar Action Plan for polar bears.

T-007 Undertake a technical review of a white paper on sustainable harvest written by the five Polar Bear Range States as part of their Circumpolar Action Plan.



Weighing cub-of-the-year in spring
Photo: A. McCall



Mother and cub on sea ice western Hudson Bay
Photo: D. McGeachy

Maternity den
Photo: D. McGeachy



Polar bear waiting for ice to reform
Photo: N. Lunn

NETWORK

T-002 Review, renew and recruit up to 33 members, as per the PBSG Terms of Reference, for the 2021–2025 Quadrennium.

COMMUNICATE

T-001 Hold 19th Working Meeting of the Polar Bear Specialist Group (virtual).

T-004 Establish, develop, renew and migrate information to a new Polar Bear Specialist Group website.

Activities and results 2021

ASSESS

Red List

T-003 (KSR 6)

Number of subpopulations assessed for status/trend: 19

Result description: The PBSG reviewed, assessed and updated status and trend of all 19 subpopulations. This assessment has been posted on the Group's website.

PLAN

Planning

T-006 (KSR 8)

Number of technical documents to support the development of conservation plans/strategies: 0

Result description: PBSG members have made significant progress on assessing and providing advice to the five Polar Bear Range States with respect to essential habitat, sustainable harvest, and climate change communications.

T-007 (KSR 8)

Provide technical review for Circumpolar Action Plan: 1

Result description: We completed a technical review of a white paper on sustainable harvest written by the five Polar Bear Range States as part of their Circumpolar Action Plan. It will be delivered to the Range States in March 2022.

NETWORK

Membership

T-002 (KSR 2)

Number of SSC members recruited: 30

Result description: We added 30 new members to the PBSG for the 2021–2025 quadrennium.

COMMUNICATE

Communication

T-004 (KSR 12)

Number of websites developed: 1

Result description: A basic website was developed on which the PBSG's current status report is available. Currently, the framework and content of a full website is under development.

Communication

T-001 (KSR 12)

Number of scientific events in which the members participated: 1

Result description: PBSG held a virtual meeting 8–10 June 2021.

Acknowledgements

We thank Polar Bears International and World Wildlife Fund for providing funding to establish and renew the Polar Bear Specialist Group website. We would also like to acknowledge the governments, agencies and organisations for their ongoing support of their employee's participation on the PBSG.

Summary of achievements

Total number of targets 2021–2025: 6

Geographic regions: 6 Global

Actions during 2021:

Assess: 1 (KSR 6)

Plan: 2 (KSR 8)

Network: 1 (KSR 2)

Communicate: 2 (KSR 12)

Overall achievement 2021–2025:

