

IUCN SSC Polar Bear Specialist Group



2018 Report



Dag Vongraven



Nick Lunn

Co-Chairs

Dag Vongraven ⁽¹⁾
Nick Lunn ⁽²⁾

Red List Authority Coordinator

Eric V. Regehr ⁽³⁾

Location/Affiliation

⁽¹⁾ Norwegian Polar Institute, Fram Center,
9296 Tromsø, Norway

⁽²⁾ Environment and Climate Change Canada,
Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

⁽³⁾ Polar Science Center, Applied Physics
Laboratory, University of Washington, Seattle,
Washington, US

Number of members

35

Social networks

Website:

<http://pbsg.npolar.no/en/>



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 for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

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. Our assessment of global threats to Polar Bears and research priorities were critical pieces that were incorporated by the Polar Bear Range States into its 2015 *Circumpolar Action Plan: Conservation Strategy for Polar Bears*. We consider the commitment to the implementation of this plan 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. During the current quadrennium, we would expect continued actions identified under this plan to be taken by the responsible authorities and that the PBSG would continue to provide technical advice and scientific oversight where appropriate.

Targets for the 2017-2020 quadrennium

Assess

Research activities: development of new criteria for describing the status/trend of Polar Bears and subsequent application to all 19 currently recognised subpopulations.

Plan

Policy: (1) provide to the five governments comprising the Polar Bear Range States, advice with respect to priorities for multi-lateral actions that the Range States could take over the next 2-10 years to best address conservation and research needs for Polar Bears; (2) participate in the 2018 Biennial Meeting of the Parties to the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears, 2–4 February 2018, Fairbanks, Alaska; (3) participate in a planned 2020 Biennial Meeting of the Parties to the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears to be held in Norway.

Network

Agreements: in collaboration with the five governments comprising the Polar Bear Range States, develop Terms of Reference for the PBSG that will enable and facilitate its role as the independent scientific advisor to the Range States.

Communicate

Scientific meetings: hold 19th Working Meeting of the PBSG.

Twin three-month-old polar bears,
Churchill, Manitoba, Canada
Photo: David McGeachy



Dr. Nick Lunn weighing three-month-old polar bear cub, Churchill, Manitoba, Canada
Photo: David McGeachy

Activities and results 2018

Assess

Research activities

i. New criteria for describing status and trend of Polar Bears have been developed and are currently under review by PBSG membership. These will be applied to all 19 currently recognised subpopulations once approved. (KSR #12)

Plan

Policy

i. Document provided to the five Polar Bear Range States identifying four primary and four secondary multi-lateral actions that they could take over the next 2-10 years to best address conservation and research needs for Polar Bears. (KSR #26)

ii. PBSG gave three presentations to the five Polar Bear Range States and Delegations: 'Polar Bear Conservation Status and Research Efforts'; 'Arctic Climate: Where We Are Going and What it Means for Polar Bears'; and 'Conservation Status of Polar Bears in Relation to Projected Sea Ice Decline'. (KSR #26)

iii. Norway announced intentions to host the meeting sometime in 2020. (KSR #26)

Network

Agreements

i. Terms of reference for the PBSG to enable and facilitate its role as the independent scientific advisor to the Range States currently under review and not yet finalised. (KSR #29)

Communicate

Scientific meetings

i. Date, location, and host organisation of the 19th Working Meeting of the PBSG not yet determined. (KSR #28)

Acknowledgements

We thank the following for financial/logistical support of the work of the IUCN SSC Polar Bear Specialist Group: Government of Canada, Norwegian Ministry of Climate and the Environment, Norwegian Polar Institute, Polar Bears International. We thank the Heads of Delegations of the five Polar Bear Range States for inviting the PBSG to attend and present at the 2018 Biennial Meeting. Finally, we would also like to thank the various government agencies and organisations for supporting their staff in participating as members of the Polar Bear Specialist Group.

Summary of activities 2018

Species Conservation Cycle ratio: 4/5

Assess	1	
Plan	3	
Network	1	
Communicate	1	

Main KSRs addressed: 12, 26, 28, 29

KSR: Key Species Result