Quarterly Conservation Update Q1 2025

This update includes highlights from our science, education, advocacy, and outreach teams in the first quarter of 2025.

Science and Research Highlights

Foundational research

Impact of this work: Any effort to conserve polar bears starts with an intimate understanding of their life history and needs. Foundational science is essential to that effort.

- New research from our team demonstrated that the decline of the Western Hudson Bay polar bear subpopulation can be directly explained by polar bears not taking in enough energy as sea ice loss in the region has shortened hunting seasons over the past four decades.
- A recent study gave insight into how polar bears fare on the sea ice in the spring, finding individuals show remarkable variation in weight gain and loss over short intervals. The study indicates that peak feeding might occur later in the season than previously assumed.
- Our ongoing maternal den study wrapped up its month-long 2025 field season in Svalbard in early March. Our team collaborates with the Norwegian Polar Institute and San Diego Zoo Wildlife Alliance to build and deploy custom camera traps that record the mother polar bear and her new cub(s) as they leave the maternal den for the first time. Denning is the most vulnerable time in a polar bear's life, and this research is helping us understand important aspects of this critical time in order to provide a scientific framework to inform policy and help ensure critical protections.

Indigenous Knowledge

Impact of this work: By partnering with Elders and Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, we can gain insights on polar bears and community coexistence.

- A study from former PBI team member Kt Miller and partner Georgina Berg explored Indigenous Knowledge of human-polar bear co-existence in Churchill, Manitoba.

Emerging Scientific Techniques

Impact of this work: By supporting these efforts, we're expanding our understanding of polar bears and Arctic ecology while also mentoring the next generation.

- A new publication from PBI's maternal den project gave new insights into behaviour of mothers and cubs during the vulnerable den emergence period, when cubs leave the den for the first time. The study combined remote camera systems with data from satellite tracking collars to develop new tools to more accurately monitor bears during this critical time.
- We'll be highlighting our "Burr on Fur" project at The Wildlife Society's 2025 annual meeting. This collaboration with zoos led to a versatile tracking tool that can help us better understand juvenile and adult male polar bears.

Management, Policy, and Advocacy Highlights

Coexistence

Impact of this work: We're committed to help people stay safe when living, working or traveling in polar bear country.

- We are actively developing a new postcard that allows visitors to effectively estimate their distance from wildlife to help keep people and bears safe. We plan to pilot the card in Manitoba this year.
- Our team is working with Environment and Climate Change Canada to coordinate the first field deployment of our fully operational "Bear-dar" detection system: early-warning technology that can detect approaching bears. The tool will be used at a remote installation in the Canadian high Arctic to alert personnel if polar bears are in the area.
- Planning continues for phase two of our deterrents testing efforts, this time led by partners at BYU. Research should begin this summer based in Ontario.

Policy and Advocacy

Impact of this work: By encouraging policies that support polar bear conservation and engaging the public in advocacy, we can help sustain the polar bears' future.

- We launched a new Take Action Center on our website, offering a wider array of opportunities for climate action to a global audience.
- The first Arctic Youth Conference—held in Tromsø, Norway in January of 2025—brought together young leaders from across the Arctic to discuss the challenges and opportunities they face in their home communities. We were

honored to support the attendance of Wyatt Daley, a young leader from Churchill, Manitoba, Canada.
- We asked the Canadian government to advance two potential protected areas: Western Hudson Bay National Marine Conservation Area and an Indigenous Protected Area in the Seal River Watershed. Protected lands and waters play an important role in polar bear conservation—from safeguarding habitat to serving as critical areas of carbon sequestration.

Education and Outreach Highlights

Education and Awareness

Impact of this work: Our outreach highlights the issues facing polar bears and inspires people to take climate action.

- We wrapped up the 20-year anniversary of the Arctic Ambassador Network, a coalition of zoos, aquariums, and wildlife parks that share our commitment to polar bear conservation, by evaluating the impact of the Network. We were thrilled to learn that Network members saw over 49 million visitors last year. Together, they held over 1 million conversations sharing the core story of polar bears and climate change last year and engaged with over 31,000 youth through in person programming!
- Our winter fun day for local Churchill kids on Louis Riel Day was a big success with high attendance, incredibly positive community feedback, great support from partners and lots of fun.
- PBI staff and field ambassadors hosted a free presentation, “An Intro to Effective Climate Change Communication”. Participants learned how specific values and explanatory metaphors make their audience more receptive to climate change messaging. The 256 registrants had the opportunity to join a community of outreach professionals changing the climate discourse to be more positive, civic-minded, and solutions-focused.

Media Coverage

Impact of this work: By sharing accurate information on polar bears and the threats they face with a global audience, we help combat misinformation and inspire action.

- We celebrated International Polar Day with high profile coverage of a new maternal den study in Smithsonian Magazine, Discover, BBC Earth and many other outlets.
- Other coverage this quarter focused on the climate-caused reduction of polar bear populations in Western Hudson Bay and a record-breaking fasting period in

Southern Hudson Bay. Key outlets included ABC News, The Weather Network and CBS News.

- In total, PBI's work was featured in 820 unique articles around the world.

To view previous quarterly conservation updates, visit the Our Impact page of our website.