

Manitoba's Polar Bear

The Polar Bear Alert Program

Polar bears are unique, majestic animals. At three metres (10 feet) tall, and weighing roughly 580 kilograms (1,300 pounds), they are truly a sight to behold.

There is only one human settlement in the world where polar bears can be observed in the wild - Churchill, Manitoba.



Protecting
& Managing
our Future

Manitoba 

Manitoba's Polar Bears

Polar bears come onto land every July when the Hudson Bay ice breaks up. In autumn, scores of these great white bears gather along the shores of the Bay, waiting for the ice to form so they can venture back out to hunt their favourite food – ring seal. Pregnant females go inland into dens to have cubs in late November and re-emerge in mid-February, when they return to the sea ice.

Providing Protection

The estimated polar bear population in the western Hudson Bay area is **935**. Manitoba is committed to taking action to protect this vulnerable, irreplaceable species. By proclaiming *The Polar Bear Protection Act*, and listing polar bears as threatened under *The Endangered Species Act*, we are providing for both the conservation and sustainability of the polar bears in Manitoba.

Polar Bear Alert Program

The Polar Bear Alert Program is the way Manitoba works to protect polar bears, people and the property in the Churchill area. Over time the need to manage polar bears became clear, recognizing that polar bears and people need to co-exist in the area for the future.

The Polar Bear Alert Program is the only one of its kind in the world, addressing the needs of both the human and bear populations. It protects people from harassment and attacks by polar bears and protects polar bears from harassment and harm by people. It is most active from mid-October to freeze up of Hudson Bay in late November.

How the Program Works

Bears that approach the Churchill area in late fall are chased out of town by Manitoba Conservation staff. Problem bears that refuse to stay away are captured and placed in a holding facility. Once the ice forms, the bears are released. They do not return to the mainland until the ice melts the following July.

The Holding Facility

The polar bear holding facility holds problem bears captured during bear alert season. Five air-conditioned cells are used during the summer and a heated holding cell is available for orphaned bear cubs. Physically containing the

bears during bear alert season allows Manitoba Conservation staff to protect the public and maintain the welfare of the bears at the same time.

Program Objectives

- protect the people and property in the Churchill area from polar bear attacks or harassment
- protect the area's polar bears from harassment or harm
- stop polar bears from learning to depend on Churchill area residents as sources of food or shelter
- protect Manitoba Conservation staff who are exposed to, or manage, the polar bear population

Avoid Polar Bears

In polar bear areas, contact with a bear can happen at any time. It is important to know how to avoid an encounter with a bear and what to do if one occurs.

To avoid contact with polar bears:

- Obey all polar bear alert signs posted around town.
- Do not carry food while walking outside.
- Stay close to your vehicle.
- Always keep a safe distance between you and any polar bear.
- Travel with a group for added safety.
- Stay alert to the possibility of contact with a polar bear.

If you do encounter a polar bear:

- Stay calm.
- Stay with your group.
- Back away, facing the polar bear at all times.
- Do not turn and run away.
- Do not play dead.
- Get into your vehicle or a building as rapidly as possible.
- Call the Polar Bear Alert line at: 204-675-2327.

Watch For Signs

Signs posted around the town of Churchill tell the public where they are most likely to run into polar bears. Anyone seeing a bear is asked to contact the polar bear alert line at **204-675-2327 (BEAR)**.

For More Information

Continued public education and co-operation will help ensure the safety of Manitobans and the success of the Polar Bear Alert Program. For more information contact:

Manitoba Conservation, Box 760 Churchill, Manitoba R0B 0E0
Phone: 204-675-8897 or toll free 1-800-214-6497
Web: manitoba.ca/conservation/wildlife/spmon/pbear/index.html