



Annual Report to Members

2016



**Your impact on
polar bear conservation**



**Our mission is to
conserve polar bears
and the sea ice they
depend on. We also
work to inspire
people to care about
the Arctic and its
connection to our
global climate.**

A Global Perspective

*Teamwork. Collaboration. Partners
around the globe.*

How can we sustain a future for polar bears? It isn't as simple as putting up a fence to guard the bears and their habitat—the ice would just melt away.

Instead, we must address the global issue of climate change and do everything we can to help the bears in the meantime. And that means forging strong relationships far and wide.

From the snow-covered mountains of Svalbard to the wilds of Alaska and the narrow streets of Marrakech, we rely on a network of partners to expand our reach and achieve our goals.

This network includes government agencies and management authorities in the nations where polar bears roam. Universities involved in polar bear and sea ice research. Native peoples. Educators. Policy makers. Film crews. And a highly dedicated network of zoos, aquariums, and museums committed to educating the public about the urgent need to act on climate.

In every aspect of our work—from research and conservation to education and outreach—we build coalitions and seek strong partners. Why? Because, together, we can accomplish so much more than we can alone.

As we look back over the past year, we're heartened by the strides made in polar bear research and management, including efforts to reduce dangerous encounters between polar bears and people. We're grateful for the wide reach of our educational programs and training sessions. And we're encouraged by the fact that worldwide momentum continues to build for meaningful action on climate.

Although the 2016 election results in the U.S. threaten climate progress, we also know that momentum is on our side, that turning back is not an option, and that, together, we can solve the climate crisis and ensure a future for wild polar bears.

Thank you for always being there and for your unflagging support—for polar bears, people, and the planet.

Gratefully,



Krista Wright
Executive Director



photo © Simon Gee

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Science and Research

In subzero weather, on the sea ice, and on the tundra

Hands numb with cold, Dr. Steven C. Amstrup will never forget his first time on the sea ice studying polar bears—more than 35 years ago.

“That first bear took my breath away,” he said, “and I still have that feeling of awe today.”

Steve’s work with the U.S. Geological Survey led to an enormous body of research that answered basic questions about polar bears and the threats they face—which helped lead to greater protections for the bears. He also mentored a number of polar bear scientists who are active in the field today.

Now Polar Bears International’s chief scientist, Steve remains committed to polar bear conservation, providing guidance to PBI on critical research questions as we race to ensure a future for the bears in a rapidly changing Arctic.

It’s work that’s made possible because of you.

Thanks to your generosity, PBI supports or conducts a number of key studies across the Arctic, teaming up with universities, government agencies, and other nonprofits.

From polar bear den studies to population research and insights on how the bears are responding to sea ice changes, this work adds to our understanding of polar bears—and provides data needed for sound policy and management decisions.

“The Collar Cam Project is a great example of innovative research and collaborative efforts. The same technology that powers the Polar Bear Cams is helping to answer questions about the polar bear’s energy use in a changing Arctic—and we’re proud to help fund it.”

~ Charlie Weingarten,
[explore.org/Annenberg Foundation](https://explore.org/AnnenbergFoundation)



Created custom-built remote camera systems for the first year of our Maternal Den Study in Svalbard, Norway, a project in partnership with the Norwegian Polar Institute and the San Diego Institute for Conservation Research.



Spent two weeks deploying Maternal Den Study camera systems in Svalbard to record when polar bear moms emerge with their cubs, what their body condition is like, and how they behave at den sites before departing for the sea ice.



Worked in subzero temperatures on the North Slope in the 15th year of the Maternal Den Study in Alaska, a long-term project on the condition and behavior of polar bear families in partnership with Brigham Young University.



Gained data and insights on the energy usage of polar bears on land and on the sea ice through the Collar Cam Study, a team effort with the U.S. Geological Survey, explore.org, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources, and other conservation partners.

Some highlights of what you made possible in 2016

Launched a Traditional Ecological Knowledge Study in northern Alaska in September; the project includes interviews by anthropologists with local polar bear hunters and cultural experts in communities on the southern Beaufort Sea.



Teamed up with the U.S. Geological Survey and other key partners on Energetics Studies with polar bears in zoos, helping scientists understand the calories required for activities including walking, swimming, running, and resting.



Tested promising new den-detection equipment known as SAR, or synthetic aperture radar, in northern Alaska. Being able to pinpoint polar bear den sites under the snow will help industry avoid disturbing denning families.



Supported a new Sea Ice Ecology Study in Hudson Bay led by the University of Alberta. The research will track movements of adult males and sub-adults on the sea ice during critical times of the year—data that will lead to improved conservation planning.



Management and Conflict Resolution

Boots on the ground, hands around the globe

The record-setting June temperatures in Anchorage, Alaska were a poignant reminder of the changes taking place in the Arctic as scientists from the five polar bear nations met to discuss ways to keep polar bears and people safe.

Throughout the year, Polar Bears International works on the frontlines of polar bear conservation, actively contributing to policy, science, and management.

In 2016, these efforts included the first-ever Human-Polar Bear Conflict Workshop, held in Churchill on Hudson Bay, with people who live and work with polar bears gathering to share best practices and exchange information.

And we're grateful to you for supporting this work.

Some of the world's most respected polar bear scientists serve on our staff and advisory council. This allows us to play a unique role in global conservation efforts, partnering with government agencies, universities, and others across the Arctic.

For example ... we are the only nonprofit with employees represented in the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group, which meets every four years.

And we currently chair the Polar Bear Range States Conflict Working Group, a task force of the nations where polar bears roam, and serve on the U.S. Polar Bear Recovery Team, led by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

"To see the mutual respect and sharing between the Churchill front-line operators and their Inuit neighbors around the Bay in Nunavut and Nunavik was very inspiring. People were of one mind and goal to protect human life and bears using each other's best practices and rich experience in the North."

~ Lorraine Brandson, curator,
Itsanitaq Museum, Churchill, Manitoba





Participated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Polar Bear Recovery Team's effort to produce a Polar Bear Conservation Management Plan. Meetings took place throughout the year and the USFWS released the final plan in December.



Helped sponsor the first-ever Human-Polar Bear Conflict Workshop, open to front-line operators along Hudson Bay. PBI co-organized the workshop with WWF-Canada, the University of Saskatchewan, and the governments of Nunavut and Manitoba.



Took part in the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group meeting in Alaska, contributing to reports on polar bear status, threats, and conservation, and exchanging information with polar bear scientists from across the circumpolar North.



Chaired meetings of the Polar Bear Range States Conflict Working Group, joining delegates from the five polar bear nations in finding ways to reduce dangerous encounters between polar bears and people, with a goal of saving lives and preventing injuries.

Some highlights of what you made possible in 2016

Supported the International Bear Association conference in Anchorage, Alaska, co-sponsoring the event and giving research presentations on current fieldwork. Our chief scientist, Dr. Steven Amstrup, also gave a public lecture.

Presented the first-ever World Ranger Day Award to the late Vladelin Kavry of Russia's Umky Patrol. The award honors unsung heroes: the polar bear patrols, rangers, and guards who help minimize conflicts between polar bears and people.

Attended the Wapusk Research and Monitoring Symposium, held in Winnipeg, Manitoba, giving a presentation on PBI's history and current activities in Wapusk National Park and the adjacent Churchill Wildlife Management Area.

Participated in ArcticNet's Annual Scientific Meeting in Winnipeg, a gathering of Arctic researchers, graduate students, northern peoples, and government and industry partners, with topics ranging from sea ice to beluga whales.



Education and Stewardship

Harnessing the power of youth

"Have you ever been bit by a polar bear?" "What made you decide to work with them?" "What can my school do to help?"

Every year, Polar Bears International's popular Tundra Connections® broadcasts link scientists in the field with students in remote locations. And every year, the questions pour in from curious and can-do kids.

Strong partners like Discovery Education, explore.org, and our network of Arctic Ambassador Center zoos, aquariums, and museums expand the reach of these webcasts, helping to carry our message around the globe.

Educating people about polar bears and the threats they face has always been a central part of the PBI's mission. Our interactive website features lesson plans and other educational materials for teachers; and students visit for facts, photos, and toolkits for community action campaigns.

Our youth engagement also includes our popular Project Polar Bear contest, where teams of kids tackle CO₂ on a community level. With projects ranging from school gardens to community recycling and no idle zones, they inspire change while gaining leadership skills along the way.



"This was by far the best webcast my students have participated in. They were all engaged and learned a lot. They could relate the topics to their daily lives, which is hard to do living in remote Alaska Bush communities."

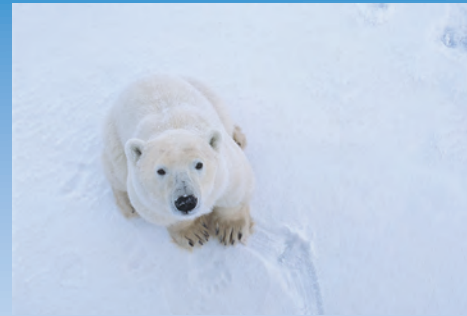
~ Emma Melkerson, Kivalina, Alaska



Teams of students from four countries took part in our annual Project Polar Bear Contest, an international competition that challenges kids to take action on climate change. Top-scoring teams win grants to continue their projects.



Classes around the world joined our Tundra Connections webcasts, with partners including Discovery Education, San Diego Zoo Global, and Manitoba's Frontier School District. Topics ranged from STEM jobs on the tundra to Arctic ABCs.



After completing a year-long course on climate change messaging through the National Network for Ocean and Climate Change Interpretation, PBI staff integrated their findings into our outreach, action campaigns, and training programs.



Teachers and students from around the globe explored content and downloaded free resources from the PBI website and iTunesU channel—from PowerPoints on polar bears to mini posters, toolkits, photos, videos, and lesson plans.

Some highlights of what you made possible in 2016

A PBI representative attended the AASHE Conference & Expo in Baltimore, Maryland. The largest sustainability conference in higher education, we took part to strengthen ties, learn, and forge new relationships.

Three students from Churchill, Manitoba were awarded paid summer internships thanks to explore.org. They developed communications skills as they took part in commentary connected with our popular Beluga Cam.

Parks Canada invited a PBI representative to help facilitate Wapusk Leadership Camp in northern Manitoba near Churchill, a week-long summer camp designed to instill a stewardship ethic and love of nature in Canadian youth.

PBI sent a representative from the Youth Arctic Coalition to Marrakech, Morocco to speak up for polar bears, other Arctic wildlife, and indigenous Arctic peoples at the COP22 United Nations climate change talks in November.



Outreach and Action Campaigns

Casting a wide net, finding common ground

Did you know ...

That zoos and aquariums hold the highest level of trust with the public when it comes to climate change, with the ability to transcend political parties and bridge divides?

And that every year, millions of people pass through zoo turnstiles in North America alone, more than all people attending sporting events combined?

That's why we invest time and energy in working with the zoos and aquariums in our Arctic Ambassador Center network. They're able to reach millions of people who might not otherwise think (or care) about climate change, and, most important, they're uniquely positioned to move the dial.

At Polar Bears International, we seek innovative ways to get our message out, regularly seeking audiences beyond the choir.

Whether it's outreach through our popular wildlife cams, an appearance on CBS Sunday Morning, or publicity related to our Save Our Sea Ice action campaigns (including International Polar Bear Day, Arctic Sea Ice Day, and Polar Bear Week), we do all we can to engage and inspire the public.

The good news: these collective efforts—from PBI and many others worldwide—have helped to shift public opinion in a positive direction, with the majority of people now supporting climate action.

"This year the Polar Bear Cam aired on large video screens as delegates met at the U.N. climate summit in Marrakech. The real-time footage of the bears looking out to an ice-free bay served as inspiration to take action—for polar bears and for all of us."

~ Christopher J. Carter, PBI
representative at the climate talks



Helped make International Polar Bear Day, Arctic Sea Ice Day, and Polar Bear Week internationally recognized awareness celebrations, with associated actions to reduce the use of fossil fuels.



Inspired people to care about the Arctic and its wildlife through live cams of polar bears, beluga whales, and northern lights with explore.org, Frontiers North Adventures, and other partners.



Motivated wildlife supporters to take action on behalf of polar bears through public outreach by PBI scientists including a TEDx Talk and lectures at the Wildlife Conservation Network and other meetings.



Reached over 6.5 million people through a CBS Sunday Morning story on the polar bears of Churchill, Manitoba and the threats they face; the program included an interview with our chief scientist.

Some highlights of what you made possible in 2016

Took part in the BBC Two's three-part Arctic Live series, which aired live in the UK. The series included interviews with PBI staff scientists, with each episode viewed by more than 2.3 million people.



Reached approximately 6.7 billion people through media outreach in print and online, with a total of 2,777 articles in publications from the Associated Press to the Washington Post to the Canadian Press.



Took part in zoo and aquarium and zookeeper conferences in the U.S., Canada, and Europe, engaging these partners in PBI action campaigns, education outreach, and collaborative research projects.



Held our Climate Alliance training with staff from zoos and aquariums in our Arctic Ambassador Center network. The six-month course began online and ended in Churchill, the polar bear capital of the world.



2016 by the Numbers

A polar bear is seen walking on a small, isolated ice floe in the middle of a vast sea of broken ice. The ice floes are of various sizes and shapes, floating on a dark blue-grey water. The bear is a light cream color, and its shadow is cast onto the ice it is standing on. The overall scene is a stark, cold representation of the Arctic environment.

3,911,372 website page views, with 1,372,430 unique visitors

7 polar bear research projects conducted and/or funded

124,126 individual and classroom views in our Tundra Connections webcasts

2,777 media articles, with a combined potential reach of 6,743,652,866

20 new Climate Alliance participants trained, for a total of 281 graduates

8 conservation and management meetings attended

17 lectures and public talks

1,063,835 Polar Bear Cam views

565 Project Polar Bear contestants from 7 countries

357,949 Facebook followers

1.9 million Facebook Live views

10 staff members, a small but mighty team!

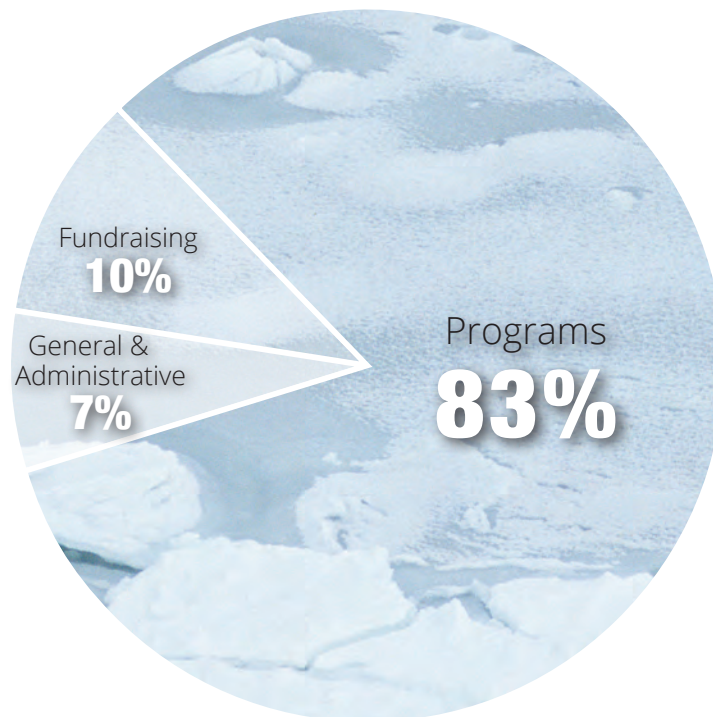
2016 source of funds

Contributions	\$1,236,346
In-kind	553,736
Restricted contributions	368,116
Sales	5,785
TOTAL SUPPORT	\$ 2,163,983

2016 use of funds

Research and Programs	\$ 1,595,997
General and Administrative	138,248
Fundraising	193,957
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$ 1,928,202

END OF THE YEAR NET ASSETS	\$ 602,345
CHANGES IN NET ASSETS	\$ 238,407



Strategic Objectives

- 1 Serve as the global resource for information regarding polar bears and their habitat.
- 2 Be the leading voice on climate warming impacts to polar bears and their Arctic home while actively seeking solutions through education, advocacy, and action.
- 3 Conduct, support, and share scientific research that informs polar bear conservation.
- 4 Educate an international audience about polar bear conservation and provide mentorship for the actions that will help ensure their survival.
- 5 Pro-actively and effectively communicate science-based information on polar bears and their conservation.
- 6 Maintain transparency in fiscal management and sound business policies and practices.
- 7 Follow best environmental practices as an organization, including minimizing our greenhouse gas footprint.



photo © Daniel J. Cox/NaturalExposures.com

*Thanks to all the
photographers who
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Polar Bear teams.*



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*Sustaining a future for polar
bears across the Arctic.*

