

Polar Bears Are Smarter Than Al Gore

by Gregory Murphy

Doomsday climate-change prophet Al Gore has turned the polar bear into the poster-species for “man-made global warming.” In his film, “An Inconvenient Truth,” Gore says that man-made global warming will cause the extinction of the polar bear in 25 years. Gore’s statement is based on a 2004 report in the journal *Polar Biology*, which claims that four polar bears drowned in the Arctic Ocean when they were caught out in open water during a freak wind storm.

Polar bear researchers say that this alarming statement by Al Gore is untrue, and that they have had to spend time debunking it every time they turn around. The same researchers say that it is easy for people who don’t live around polar bears to believe that “global warming” is going to cause the bear’s extinction, because the science of Arctic climate is very complex, and because there are 20 separate polar bear populations, each with a different dynamic (see map).

Let’s take a look at the complexity of polar bear life. First, the polar bear has been around for about 250,000 years, having survived both an Ice Age, and the last Interglacial period (130,000 years ago), when there was virtually *no ice* at the North Pole. Clearly, polar bears have adapted to the changing environment, as evidenced by their presence today.

(This fact alone makes the polar bear smarter than Al Gore and the other global warming alarmists. Perhaps the polar bear survived the last Interglacial because it did not have computer climate models that said polar bears should not have survived!)

Alarmists like the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the Center for Biodiversity, and Greenpeace state that climate change has caused a decrease in the number of polar bear cubs born. Their main argument is the decrease in the number of triplet cubs born. Polar bear researchers say that triplet births do occur, but they are normally not as common among polar bears as the alarmists assert. The alarmists’ statements on the re-



Three polar bears approach the starboard bow of the USS Honolulu, which is surfaced 280 miles from the North Pole. Contrary to the lies spewed out by Al Gore and company, so-called Global Warming poses no threat to polar bears in the Arctic.

US Navy/Chief Yeoman Alphonso Braggs

productive periods of the bears, researchers say, are based on studies of only two out of 20 bear populations. The two populations that were studied show a decline in the number of cubs born, but both these bear populations are very large, and there is lots of competition for food.

The global warming alarmists say that the polar bear is running out of habitat and food because warming is melting the Arctic sea ice. The researchers say that the bears sense the ice thinning during the Spring, which occurs naturally every year, and they move farther inland. As to the food question, Arctic researchers and wildlife officials have seen polar bears catching ring seals in open water and even gorging themselves on blackberries, which shows that the polar bear is very adaptive in its hunting habits.

The polar bear is well suited to feast-or-famine eating habits. The bears feast during Spring to early Summer, and fast most of the rest of the year. In fact, the polar bear is one of the only bears that can switch its metabolism into hibernation mode at will, when there is a low food environment.

On the question of the polar bear running out of habitat: This allegation is based on studies by the WWF, which allege that the Arctic Basin is melting at alarming rates, and the bears are not able to den on the sea ice and have to move farther inland. But the Polar Bear Specialist Group, the environmentalist-sponsored scientific body that monitors polar bears, does not even count the Arctic Basin as a population center for the bear! The Arctic Basin is only a Summer retreat area for them; most of the year, the polar bears are located closer to the continental shelf.

Change Is Not Necessarily Negative

Not all climate changes are negative. Yes, it is true that melting sea ice will pose difficulties for wildlife managers and conservation authorities. Population boundaries may change to accommodate shifts in distribution. But no evidence has been presented by the proponents of global warming, and no evidence exists, that suggests that both bears and the conservation systems that regulate them will not adapt and respond to the new conditions. Polar bears have persisted through many similar climate cycles.

Summary of Polar Bear Population Status per 2005

Population	Aerial survey/ Mark-recapture analysis		Estimated risk of future decline**
	Number (year of estimate)	Estimate 12 SE or min-max*	
East Greenland	unknown	No estimate	
Barents Sea	2997 (2004)	2299-4116	No estimate
Kara Sea	unknown		No estimate
Laptev Sea	800-1200 (1993)		No estimate
Chukchi Sea			No estimate
Southern Beaufort Sea	1500 (2006)	1000-2000	No estimate
Northern Beaufort Sea	1200 (1986)	133-2097	No estimate
Viscount Melville Sound	161 (1992)	121-201	Very Low
Norwegian Bay	190 (1998)	102-278	Higher
Lancaster Sound	2541 (1998)	1759-3323	Higher
M Clintock Channel	284 (2000)	166-402	Very Low
Gulf of Boothia	1523 (2000)	953-2093	Lower
Foxe Basin	2197 (1994)	1677-2717	Lower
Western Hudson Bay	935 (2004)	794-1076	Very High
Southern Hudson Bay	1000 (1988)	684-1116	Lower
Kane Basin	164 (1998)	94-234	Very High
Baffin Bay	2074 (1988)	1544-2604	Very High
Davis Strait			Lower
Arctic Basin			unknown

* Refers to estimates of number of bears for each area based on past observations and projections of increases in certain areas.

** Where Population Variability Analysis Simulation Models have been conducted, risk of decline is classed as Very Low (0-20%), Lower (20-40%), Moderate (40-60%), Higher (60-80%), and Very High (80-100%). Total estimate of world abundance: 20,000 - 25,000

This chart shows the status of the polar bear populations in 2005, and was adapted from the population status chart from the Proceedings of the environmentalist-sponsored Polar Bear Specialist Group 2005 meeting in Seattle, Washington. The status chart shows the population area and the number of bears observed, as well as the risk of decline. In the case of the Western Hudson Bay and the Baffin Bay, polar bear populations are shown to be very highly at risk for decline in population; that is because of unregulated hunting by the native people and the overselling of hunting permits. In the case of Baffin Bay, the problem of unregulated hunting is compounded by the fact that the population of polar bears is monitored by two different nations: Canada and Denmark.

Polar bears have a life span of about 25 to 30 years, and adult male bears can grow to a height of 240-260 cm (8-8.5 ft) and can weigh 400-600 kg (880-1,320 lbs). Adult female polar bears are half the height of males, and usually weigh about 150-250 kg (330-550 lbs).

The WWF states that man-made global warming will cause the polar bears to come more into contact with human populations. This statement is based on the Churchill, Manitoba (Canada) polar bear population, which in the recent period, has had a rash of bears eating at the landfill. Area polar bear researchers say that this will happen, and has happened in the past, and is not caused by global warming, but more by the fact that the bears find this an easy way to grab a quick meal.

The other part of the Churchill story, is that there is now an overzealous group of wildlife officers capturing large numbers of bears who are allegedly threatening humans; but many are no danger to people. These "statistics" are then used by the



IUCN/SSCPolar Bear Specialist Group

This map, which is keyed to the accompanying chart, shows the distribution of polar bear populations in the Arctic Region. The abbreviations refer to the regions identified in the chart, e.g., KB = Kane Basin, and so forth.

WWF to make the case that polar bears are being displaced by global warming.

In 2006, the Center of Biodiversity petitioned the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to list the polar bear as “threatened.” This petition was based, as described above, on studies of only two polar bear populations, and from this, the petition makes general statements about the entire worldwide polar bear population. Although the petition claims to be based on the best science, it ignored the 2005 study produced by the Polar Bear Speciality Group that showed that several populations of polar bears had *increased*, and only two populations had declined. In respect to these two populations, the Specialty Group said that much of the decline was caused by unregulated hunting (by the Inuit population and others), not global warming. Could this be why this report is ignored by the global warming alarmists?

At present, the polar bear is one of the best managed of the large Arctic mammals. This high level of monitoring was set up in 1973 by the World Conservation Union with the International Agreement on Conservation of Polar Bears. The agreement set into place cooperative research and monitoring of the bears among five countries: Canada, Denmark, Norway, the United States, and the former U.S.S.R (Russian

Federation). If all the Arctic nations continue to abide by the terms of the Polar Bear Agreement, the future of the bears is secure.

In fact, one of the effects of listing the polar bears as “threatened” will be to end or curtail the monitoring and research that is currently being done. Thus the petition will undo what has been set up to secure the polar bears’ future, making that future less secure.

One of the main reasons for the petition by Greenpeace and the Center for Biodiversity is to shut down any economic development in the Arctic region. The petition would stop all oil and natural gas exploration in the Arctic, on the grounds that it endangers the polar bear. But this petition has little to do with the polar bear, and everything to do with a Malthusian fascist agenda to stop human progress and development.

Given the fact the polar bear has survived an Ice Age and the last Inter-glacial, and has shown itself to be smarter than Al Gore, it is silly to believe that the polar bear will become extinct in 25 years solely on the basis of media-assisted hype.

For Further Information

More information on polar bears and climate change can be found in this recently published paper, “Polar Bears of the Western Hudson Bay and Climate Change: Are warming spring air temperatures the ‘ultimate’ survival control factor?” The authors of the paper are: M.G. Dyck, Nunavut Arctic College; W. Soon and S. Baliunas, Harvard-Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics; R.K. Baycock, Clayton H. Riddel, Faculty of Environment University of Manitoba; D. R. Legates, Center for Climatic Research University of Delaware; T.F. Ball, Climate and Environment Consultant; and L.O. Hancock, World Bank. The paper can be accessed at: http://scienceandpublicpolicy.org/sppi_reprint_series/polar_bears_of_western_hudson_bay_and_climate_change.html

To read more about the status of polar bear populations, see the Polar Bear Specialist Group’s website at <http://pbsg.npolar.no>.