

Bear tracking in the Arctic



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Polar Bear tracking

WWF is actively working with Arctic specialists and have several programmes in the region. One of them is the tracking of polar bears. The animals are fitted with radio collars that track their movements via satellite signals. The scientists can follow the bear's path and use this information to learn more about how they use their habitat. If the ice carries on melting, feeding might become tougher for these bears and the collar will help reveal how they will adapt to this new situation. "Satellite collars are fantastic instruments that give unique knowledge about the life of the animal we study". Research around Svalbard has shown that polar bears within the same population can have very different survival strategies. Some bears wander over large areas across the Barents Sea hunting from the sea ice year round, whereas other bears might spend their whole life in just one of the fjords around Spitsbergen".



Three bears were recently fitted with collars but experts have unfortunately lost track of them after several months. The collars were set to transmit for a period of 15 months and the bears whereabouts could be followed on the WWF Polar Bear Tracker website. The bears were fitted with the collars in April 2003. Transmission began to fail in August for Samantha, one of the three bears. Viira, the second bear, is still sending signals but not as much as it was hoped for. As for Marianne, our third bear, she has lost her collar and recently stopped transmitting. The team wishes her the best of luck!



Polar bears are the top predator in the Arctic marine ecosystem and are found throughout the circumpolar Arctic. There are 22'000 polar bears worldwide. Climate change could have drastic consequences for these precious animals who will be left with less time to hunt for food when the sea ice in the Arctic melts. Computer modelling of future climate suggests that by 2080 the Arctic Sea will completely disappear during the summer months.



Fundraising

This year's Panda Ball, WWF's annual fundraising event, had for theme the Arctic. 400 people attended the ball and the fund raised during the evening was then distributed to the various projects put in place by the WWF Arctic Programme. H.S.H. Prince Albert II of Monaco was the guest of honour, as he will be departing to the North Pole in Spring 2006 on a scientific expedition following his great great grand fathers footsteps. The results of his expedition will be presented at a 100 years Commemoration Celebration which will be held in Monaco in 2006.

WWF International has a VIP club for international business people and if you would like to contribute professionally or individually you could do so by joining the Living Planet Club.

WWF encourages everybody to participate to the safeguard of our planet and its inhabitants and leave future generations a living planet.

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The Arctic is one of the last wild places on earth where humans and nature still coexist. But the Arctic is facing a crucial threat: climate change. Global warming is much faster in regions covered by ice, which are very sensitive to the smallest change. Having a strong influence on the rest of the world, it is not just the Arctic's biodiversity that is at stake but that of the entire planet. Glaciers and the ice pack are melting and the consequences could be disastrous for the local population, humans and animals, by the end of this century.