

Progress Report, Action #58
2018-2020 Bilateral and Multilateral Actions,
Circumpolar Action Plan:
Conservation Strategy for the Polar Bear



Action	Use the PBHIMS database to produce safety education materials for use throughout the Arctic in order to minimize and mitigate human-bear interactions
Point(s) of contact or Lead country	Conflict Working Group/United States Marty Obbard, Sybille Klenzendorf, Jim Wilder, Mary Colligan martynobbard@gmail.com , Sybille.Klenzendorf@WWFUS.ORG , james_wilder@fws.gov , mary_colligan@fws.gov
Partner Countries	n/a
Timeline Description as per 2018-2020 implementation table	Task proposed for 2018-2020 Proposed Timeline: January-June 2018: CWG Range states will compile existing information on polar bear safety messages currently in use, as well as examples from the black and brown bear world. Summer 2018: CWG meets face to face to: (1) identify priority polar bear safety messages; (2) the relative merits of different data sources, with priority given to published literature and (3) best practices for proactively minimizing human-polar bear conflicts. September 2018-June 2019: Produce a suite of vetted polar bear safety messages, along the lines of Alaska’s 2017 “A Framework for Bear Safety Messages in Alaska” produced by the Alaska Interagency Bear Safety Education Working Group September 2019: final report complete and posted to RS website.
Baseline status	Not developed.
Planned Outputs	
Modifications	
Progress Report Date	September 30, 2019

Progress Report on Activity:

Dr. Tom Smith and a student assistant completed an evaluation of messaging from a variety of sources within the Range States that gave advice on safety in polar bear country. Messages were grouped into 4 categories:

1. Get informed (Beware)
2. Carry/know/use deterrents (Prepare)
3. Camp/Hike/Trip Management (Take Care)
4. If all else fails – escalating encounters (Deter Bear)

On March 26, 2019, a subgroup of the CWG met in Anchorage discuss the effort by the CWG to review existing polar bear safety messaging being disseminated within the Range States, and to revise those messages as needed. While the summary compiled by Dr. Smith is thorough in listing messages by agency, by frequency and by category, it does not address which of these messages are correct (in terms of safety advice) or their priority (that is, if limited to the most critical of messages, which would you include and in what order?).

Next Steps:

Prior to the 2020 Meeting of the Parties, the CWG proposes to:

1. Review Alaska's 2017 "A Framework for Bear Safety Messages in Alaska" and use this as the foundation for our polar bear safety messages. The rationale for this is that the information contained in that document will pertain to a large extent to polar bears, and it has already been extensively vetted by the multi-agency members of the Alaska Interagency Bear Safety Education Working Group. Obviously, some sections of the document are not relevant to polar bears, and some of the messaging will need to be modified, but this is a solid bedrock foundation for us to work from.
2. Review Dr. Smith's spreadsheet of agency polar bear safety messages for anything that this expert group feels is legitimate to include in our recommended bear safety messages.
3. Review "2017 Wilder et al. Polar Bear Attacks findings.doc" and update as necessary (e.g., can no longer say that no female with cubs has attacked and killed people).
4. Incorporate all of the above into "A Framework for Polar Bear Safety Messages". As a side note, it will be important to include a specific section which identifies differences between polar bears and black/brown bears, and safety advice that is different between the 3 species. For example, some polar bears are not deterred by large groups of people, particularly when they are desperate and in poor condition.
5. Use PBHIMS to evaluate outstanding questions (e.g., what is best advice for responding to an incident involving a female with cubs?).
6. **End product:** a basic, consistent, science-based set of bear safety messages that are vetted through the expert CWG and can be placed on the RS website for use by entities throughout the Arctic, including agencies, tour guide operators, recreationists, scientists, hunters, industry etc. These vetted safety messages could then be used according to each country's needs (e.g., incorporated into brochures, websites, etc.). The key to this initiative is that everyone throughout the RS consistently use the same basic polar bear safety messages. This end product is intended to be THE reference when developing polar bear safety publications and presentations for the public. This document is not intended to be used in its entirety or verbatim for the public, but is instead meant to be a framework for consistent messaging.

Considerations Going Forward:

Yes, recommend that this action be retained without modification.