



Quarterly Conservation Update Q1 2026

This update highlights the work from our science, education, advocacy, and outreach teams in the first quarter of 2026.

Science and Research Highlights

Foundational Research

Impact of this work: Any effort to conserve polar bears begins with an in-depth understanding of their life history and needs. Foundational research is essential to that effort.

- [A new study](#) led by scientists at the Norwegian Polar Institute and supported by Polar Bears International found that the body condition of polar bears in the Barents Sea subpopulation has remained largely stable, even as this part of the Arctic has experienced rapid warming and sea ice loss. PBI is supporting **new energetics research** to better understand why polar bears in this region appear to have been buffered in the short-term. Strengthening energetics models with data from better-understood populations will provide vital information on how the impacts of sea ice loss will unfold in different parts of the Arctic where polar bears are less well studied.
- PBI postdoctoral fellow Dr. Ruth Rivkin led the **first-ever synthesis** of polar bear evolutionary research, confirming that [polar bears are not genetically adapting to climate change](#). The resulting dataset will empower wildlife managers to incorporate genetics in conservation planning.

Emerging Scientific Techniques

Impact of this work: By supporting these efforts, we're expanding our understanding of polar bears and Arctic ecology while also mentoring the next generation of polar bear scientists.

- [Bear-dar](#), our polar bear-detecting radar, is functioning well in its **first deployment**, in Eureka, Nunavut, as we continue to tweak and improve its capabilities. We're now looking to expand this and related technology to new locations where a bear alert system can improve the safety of both bears and people.

Management, Policy, and Advocacy Highlights

Keeping People and Polar Bears Safe

Impact of this work: We're committed to helping people stay safe when living, working or recreating in polar bear country.

- We've been steadily **connecting with communities** in Northern Ontario this quarter. We are [providing](#) polar bear safety posters, colouring books, and supplies in response to community requests and needs.

Policy and Advocacy

Impact of this work: By encouraging policies that support polar bear conservation and engaging the public in advocacy, we can help sustain the future of polar bears.

- Our Director of Policy, Emily Ringer, **provided expert guidance** in January at the Meeting of the Parties to the Polar Bear Range States (PBRS)—the five countries that signed the 1973 Agreement on the Conservation of Polar Bears (Canada, Greenland, Norway, Russia, and the U.S.). Her [research](#) is helping the PBRS implement their 10-year conservation plan.
- Policy staff met with federal and provincial leaders in Manitoba to amplify the Town of Churchill's [concerns about polar bear management and waste management](#), and to **support innovative solutions** as part of the planned industrial and infrastructure development in this sensitive region.
- PBI's Chief Research Scientist **provided expert commentary** about the impacts of proposed oil and gas activities on denning polar bears in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge.
- We're providing **science-based feedback** on recent U.S. government proposals that will affect polar bears, including four proposed regulatory changes to the U.S. Endangered Species Act and a draft plan for a new offshore oil and gas leasing program.

Education and Outreach Highlights

Education and Awareness

Impact of this work: Our outreach highlights the issues facing polar bears and empowers people to take climate action.

- Our 2025 numbers are out: We were thrilled to **connect with 10,810 people** at our interpretive centres in [Churchill](#) and [Svalbard](#) and **reach over 35,000 people** through virtual programming, from [live chats](#) on the tundra to individual classroom visits. Our [explore.org](#) cams topped **two million views** for the first time since 2022.

- During aurora season in Churchill, we **connected with the community** through a free “Winter Fun Day” for local children, a “Lil Cub Club” Pre-K program, hosted the local Girl Guides and Boy Scouts, and offered two free community presentations by postdocs Dr. Chloe Rodrigues and Dr. Brooke Biddlecombe on their current and recent research.
- We helped **organize and facilitate** the [International Polar Bear Conference](#) in Copenhagen, Denmark, bringing together professionals and polar bear experts to share knowledge, experience and new perspectives. Our presentation on communicating about polar bears and climate change reached **74 participants** (including team members from **19 Zoos and Aquariums** that support our work) from **18 countries**.
- The outreach and education team has already **connected with 6,222 learners** in 2026 through virtual events and individual classroom sessions. These connections provide an opportunity to tell the polar bear story, help people see themselves as a part of that story, and empower them to pursue solutions..
- PBI team members presented, met with leadership and built relationships at 5 [Arctic Ambassador Centers](#) (AACs), our network of zoos, aquariums, and wildlife parks that share our commitment to polar bear conservation. We welcomed **two new AACs** to the Network: Lumigny Safari Reserve in France and Ranua Wildlife Park in Finland.

Media Coverage

Impact of this work: By sharing accurate information on polar bears and the threats they face with a global audience, we help combat misinformation and inspire them to dive deeper.

- In the first quarter of 2026, our work was featured in nearly **800 news articles in Esquire, Popular Science, Canadian Geographic, CBC** and more.
- Social posts about International Polar Bear Day, an annual event created by PBI to highlight the importance of polar bear mothers and cubs to population health, **reached more than 510 million people**. On Instagram, we gained more than 1000 new followers.
- We saw a net increase of nearly **4,700 Instagram followers in Q1, a 4.2% increase**. This is the largest increase in one quarter since 2020.
- 2025 delivered another [amazing year for media coverage](#) with **over 4,000 articles across more than 1,500 outlets**, including **CBS, BBC, Associated Press and AFP**.

To view previous quarterly conservation updates, please visit [Our Impact](#) on the Polar Bears International website.