



News Release

POLAR BEARS INTERNATIONAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Alarmed Polar Bear Chooses Adaptation—in a Hurry!

Baltimore, MD/Sebastapol, CA – Magnet, the world-renowned 10-year-old polar bear resident at the Maryland Zoo in Baltimore, has heard all the gossip about global warming advancing at an unprecedented rate. And he knows it means polar bears face dire consequences as the sea ice vanishes at alarming speed. So, with his usual sense of humor and a willingness to trade his elevated position as a Lord of the Arctic to aid his species' chance for survival—Magnet took advantage of the fresh soil in his exhibit to turn himself into a simple, back-country black bear.

“Would that polar bears could adapt so quickly,” said Robert Buchanan, president of Polar Bears International, the leading resource for polar bear information worldwide. The organization focuses on advancing scientific research and public education in its efforts to conserve the polar bears and their habitat.

According to Buchanan, “Adaptation is generally a pretty slow process, and with the accelerated rate of climate change occurring right now, there’s a chance that large populations of polar bears will not have time to develop the skills and physiological changes they need to face an iceless arctic.” Polar bears depend on sea ice as a platform from which to hunt seals, the mainstay of their diet. Scientists now predict that two-thirds of the world's polar bears could vanish by 2050 if current warming trends continue.

Although polar bears are treading on thin ice, the situation is not irreversible—and PBI is taking a two-pronged approach to saving the bears. First, PBI is working with the world's leading polar bear scientists to gather the data they need to make sound management decisions. For example, PBI supports the global Polar Population Project, which is helping scientists pinpoint the geographic pockets where polar bears might survive as the sea-ice diminishes. Second, PBI's wide range of educational programs *inspire*, *inform*, and *empower* people to make a difference by reducing carbon emissions and motivating others to do the same.

During 2008, PBI is celebrating the Year of the Polar Bear by bringing leading scientists and wildlife organizations together with scientists and behaviorists from zoological communities

around the world to collaborate on initiatives for the betterment of all polar bears. Some of these include:

- Conferencing Classroom, where leading scientists conduct live Webcasts to schools and teach students from the tundra
- Leadership Camp/Adventure Learning Program, where high school students, nominated and selected by schools and zoos, spend nearly two weeks on the tundra with educators and scientists, communicate by internet with their schoolmates—and return home to reach their communities through self-initiated TV interviews, presentations, and other events
- Zoo Visitor Enhancement, which provides every participating zoo with a polar bear interpretive cart and presentation materials.
- Local TV Broadcasts, where PBI will coordinate interviews with leading polar bear and arctic researchers for local TV stations
- National Teen Contest, where participating zoos become part of a nation-wide competition to attract teens to act on conservation issues on behalf of polar bears in their communities and become Arctic Ambassadors
- Online Game, which is a massive, multi-layer environment that immerses players into the majestic, harsh, and fragile world of the arctic
- Churchill, Manitoba, Canada Tour, where representatives of participating zoos will experience life in view of the polar bears on the famous Tundra Buggy® Lodge during peak polar bear season

“That polar bears are in trouble is undeniable. What needs to be done to help them requires knowledge and cooperation as soon as possible. PBI is the place to start. We welcome all inquiries,” Buchanan concluded.

Polar Bears International is a non-profit organization devoted to worldwide conservation of the polar bear through support of research and education. World headquarters are in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, at 550-5 Donald Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3L-2T4 , Canada. U.S. headquarters are in Sebastapol, California. Membership begins with a donation of \$25 and includes a quarterly newsletter. One hundred percent of donations go to support PBI initiatives. All administrative costs are covered by its on-line gift shop sales and directors’ donations. Board and advisory council members receive no compensation and are not reimbursed for expenses.

Richard and Valerie Beck are PBI board members living in Jackson Hole.

For more information, see www.polarbearsinternational.org.