



News Release

POLAR BEARS INTERNATIONAL

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Polar Bears International Declares 2008 as The Year of the Polar Bear

Winnipeg, Manitoba/Sebastapol, CA – The Year of the Polar Bear (YPB) began on New Year’s Day with a ceremony at the Oregon Zoo in Portland. Polar Bears International (PBI) and Oregon Zoo officials kicked off the campaign in an effort to raise people’s awareness of these Lords of the Arctic. PBI’s two-pronged mission is to support conservation measures through scientific research and to educate the public about issues relating to the polar bear and its habitat.

“The YPB initiative is a unique collaboration between PBI and over 35 top zoos and institutions to help them become education centers on Arctic conservation. PBI’s position is that zoos have the potential to reach millions of people and inspire meaningful change,” according to Robert Buchanan, PBI president. “We are especially focused on providing the younger generation with the tools and opportunities to become ambassadors for their own futures—and for that of the world’s polar bears.”

YPB will extend the reach of PBI programs that bring 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.
- 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.

“Though PBI has been planning the YPB campaign for several years, our timing couldn’t be better. In light of the reports about climate change and the shrinking ice cap, polar bears are in the news. Not only are they the charismatic symbol of the Arctic, they are the sentinel species for the effects of changing conditions,” said Buchanan.

PBI’s goal is to assist scientists, wildlife management officials, environmental and political entities—as well as to educate the general public—in making informed decisions and effective plans by building the world’s largest repository of information about polar bears and their habitat.”

“Whether one has *not* formed an opinion about climate change, arctic drilling, or other arctic/polar bear conservation issues—or whether one’s opinion is steadfast on one side of the issues or the other, Polar Bears International is the resource for continuing one’s education on this majestic animal and its environs.

“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 through 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 sales from its on-line gift shop. Board and advisory council members receive no compensation and are not reimbursed for expenses.

For more information, see www.polarbearsinternational.org.