GOVERNMENT OF GREENLAND

MINISTRY OF FISHERIES, HUNTING AND AGRICULTURE

Guidelines for encounters with - /and observation of polar bears

Polar bears pose a potential threat to humans, livestock, effects, properties, etc. Avoid any behavior that may provoke an attack.

Feeding of polar bears

Feeding polar bears is prohibited, and should under no circumstances take place. This can lead to polar bears repeatedly seeking out residential areas.

Polar bears in the wild or outside city limits

Keeping a safe distance from a sighted polar bear is the safest option in avoiding any attack. Upon observing a polar bear, you must leave the area immediately. Contact The Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture, the village authorities and the wild life officer.

An adventurous nature and desire to take photographs of the polar bear do not justify any act that may put you or the polar bear in danger.

What to do upon encountering a polar bear:

- Do not walk or sail up to the polar bear. Leave the area
- If necessary, fire a few warning shots with a rifle, a signal pistol, a foghorn or something else that may work as a deterrent and scare the polar bear away
- Notify The Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture, the village authorities and wild life officer about where you sighted the polar bear.

Travelling in polar bear country

In areas where observations of polar bears are frequent, it is recommended to carry a rifle of cal. .30-06 as a minimum, loaded with soft point ammunition, at all times. When camping in these areas, you should always have a polar bear guard and/or a warning system (e.g. trip wires). Ensure that sleeping tents and food stock are separated by a minimum of 50 meters. Handling of waste and its disposal must also be positioned well away from tents and the food stock. When placing your camp, avoid areas:

- with active glaciers
- with pack ice (on ice)
- ravines/crevasses along the coast
- where there is a polar bear den nearby
- where there are traces of polar bears; tracks, fresh feces, etc.
- that may disturb your hearing, e.g. a river.

Polar bears at towns and villages

When a polar bear is approaching a inhabited area, attempt to scare it away, firing warning shots with a rifle, signal pistols or similar. Metallic sounds, from banging on pots for example, can also be used as polar bear deterrent. Boats, snowmobiles or ATV's may be used in such circumstances. The driving

of polar bears is done in a slow pace - only a few km's per hour as polar bears are easily overheated, which may have a lethal effect on them.

In any case, you must abide by the orders given by the Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture, Police, village authorities or wild life officer.

Problem Bears

Problem Bears are defined as individuals that repeatedly, and despite being driven away, seek out inhabited areas.

License to kill

The option of killing a polar bear is an absolute last resort. Cases of problem bears are evaluated individually by The Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture (APNN)[1] to determine whether it is necessary to kill a polar bear. The necessity of killing a polar bear must be documented with photographs or other reliable source of documentation. As a general rule, police, village authorities or wild life officers stand in charge of the killing.

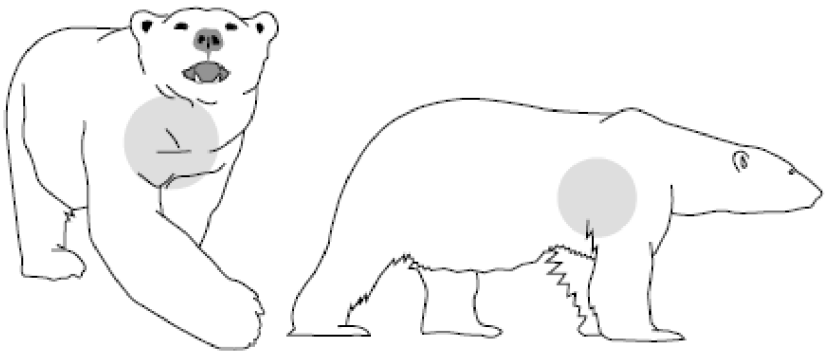


Figure 1: shot placement (sysselmannen.no)

In the case of polar bear cubs

Polar bear cubs are born in high winter, and it is estimated to be around the beginning of January. When a cub is approx. 2 years old, it is usually weaning from its mother. It will by then, regardless of gender have the same size as the mother. If the cub is NOT as big as the mother, it is approx. 1 year old, and would NOT be able to fend for itself.

If it is 1 meter long, measured from snout to tail, it will approx. be 1 year and with all probability, still dependent on its mother. If it is 1m high, standing on four legs, it is about. 1.5 -2 m long and would most probably already be 2 years old and able to fend for itself.

There is no significant difference in size, between the male and female polar bear in the very first years of its lifetime. Measured in March-April, the length measured in a straight line from snout to tail of 1-year-old polar bears in Greenland is ca. 147 cm, while the 2-year olds are about. 172 cm. The 2-year-olds are almost as long as their mothers.

(Source; Greenland Institute of Natural Resources).

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