

# **World: FACTBOX: International Polar Bear Day**

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**Body**

TASS-FACTBOX. February 27 marks International ***Polar Bear*** Day, which in Russia is often known simply as ***Polar Bear*** Day.

International ***Polar Bear*** Day

The observance of International ***Polar Bear*** Day is the initiative of US non-profit organization ***Polar Bears*** International (PBI), which lobbies for efforts to protect and preserve the world's population of ***polar bears***. The day falls at the end of winter, when ***bears*** with cubs are in their dens, as this time of the year is considered to be the most vulnerable in the life of a ***polar bear***.

Although the day has no official status, since the late 2000s ***polar bear*** protection events have been held around the world to coincide with it. For example, the organizers recommend that all residents of the Northern Hemisphere reduce their home heating levels, thereby reducing the rate of global warming, as climate change is leading to a reduction in the Arctic Ocean ice cap that serves as the natural habitat of ***polar bears***.

About the ***polar bear***

The ***polar bear***, whose Latin name - ursus maritimus - means "sea ***bear***," is one of the Earth's largest terrestrial predators. Males grow to an average height of 2.5 meters in length and a weight of 400-600 kilograms, with some reaching 800-900 kg. The females of the species are much smaller; they are typically 1.5-2 meters tall and weigh 150-300 kg. The animals have well-developed hearing, vision and sense of smell, and are able to move overland at speeds of up to 40 km/h and tolerate temperatures below -45 \xB0C. The average life expectancy is 25-30 years, and up to 45 years in captivity.

According to an assessment by a group of ***polar bear*** specialists at the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), there are approximately 26,000 ***polar bears*** in the world, but monitoring is complicated due to the inaccessibility of Arctic regions and animal migration. ***Polar bears*** are found on the island of Greenland (an autonomous territory of Denmark), in Norway's Arctic Ocean archipelago of Svalbard (formerly Spitzbergen), and in the US state of Alaska, as well as in Canada and Russia. There are 19 populations of the predator, 60% of which live in Canada. Three groups are found in Russia, the Kara-Barents Sea, Laptev and Chukchi-Alaska, which comprise 5,000 to 7,000 individual ***bears***.

The ***polar bear*** is included in the Red List of Endangered Species (often referred to as the "IUCN Red List") as a "vulnerable species" (the fifth of nine categories of protected status). In addition to climate change, scientists consider commercial activities (for example, oil and gas exploration and production), environmental pollution, hunting and poaching to be the main threats to the ***polar bear***. According to IUCN forecasts, as a result of adverse changes in habitat, the population of the species may decrease by as much as 30% by 2050.

Conservation efforts

In the middle of the 20th century, the ***polar bear*** was threatened with extinction due to hunting. For the first time at the international level, attention was drawn to this species in 1954 and 1956 at the IV and V General Assemblies of the IUCN, where the need for its protection was discussed. On November 15, 1973, in Oslo, Norway, the governments of Canada, Denmark, Norway, the Soviet Union and the United States signed an agreement on the conservation of ***polar bears***. It provides for a complete ban on ***bear*** hunting for commercial and sporting purposes, as well as hunting from aircraft and icebreakers.

On October 16, 2000, in Washington, the governments of the United States and Russia signed an Agreement on the Conservation and Use of the Chukchi-Alaskan ***Polar Bear*** Population, which regulates the hunting, shooting and trapping of ***polar bears*** and the turnover of hunting products by the indigenous peoples of Chukotka and Alaska; under the document, only indigenous peoples have the right to hunt and trap ***polar bears***.

Greenland and Canada have a quota system for ***polar bear*** hunting. Since 2007, "***Bear*** Patrols" have been operating in the Russian Arctic, which conduct coastal monitoring with the involvement of Arctic villagers and the staff of coastal weather stations, which includes a network of observation posts located from Kolguev Island in the west to the Bering Strait in the east. In addition, Russia is implementing a strategy for the conservation of the ***polar bear*** in Russia through 2030.

Source: Russian News Agency

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