

# **Ban trophy hunts to save polar bears**

The Santa Fe New Mexican

March 23, 2024 Saturday

Copyright 2024 The Santa Fe New Mexican All Rights Reserved

**Section:** A; Pg. 9

**Length:** 533 words

**Byline:** Cyril Christo

**Body**

We arrived in Churchill, Manitoba, Canada, in the middle of autumn in 2004. That date feels like prehistory, almost antediluvian by today's reckoning with climate change. ***Polar bears*** were everywhere on the march and the Hudson Bay population seemed stalwart and secure. We had come to marvel at a being commensurate with public life in that town of barely 900. In Churchill, one had to watch one's back lest wandering ***polar bears*** came around the corner and one had to swiftly find safety within a house, any homestead at all. It is why most doors remained unlocked, allowing locals to immediately enter a neighbor's house in case a marauding ***bear*** was spotted.

As the major ***polar bear*** trophy hunting country in the world, Canada literally ***bears*** the brunt of responsibility for the ***polar bear***'s future. Unfortunately, its quota system is impairing the overall ***polar bear*** population, which most biologists in value-free fashion insist is sustainable. The truth is that besides climate change, trophy hunting in the hundreds, and the maximum sustainable yield allowed each year is a grave danger to the ***polar bears*** ability to survive. Nobody knows exactly how many ***polar bears*** exist. Just as some believe there my be no more than 12,000 to 10,000 lions in Africa as opposed to the 20,000 some estimate still remain, the situation is even harder to gauge with the ***polar bear*** because of its nomadic nature and overlapping populations across vast territories.

I had the privilege to meet Ole Linden, a Norwegian biologist and photographer in Svalbard in the summer of 2019. For years, he has been actively trying to ban ***polar bear*** hunting in the European parliament. His book, ***Polar Bears*** and Humans, had just come out. His thesis was straightforward: Hunting was not only impacting their numbers and overall population but the future of ***polar bears*** was very much on the line. His research went against the grain of most scientific knowledge still bent on believing that there is manageable quota in hunting ***polar bears***. His warning is clear: If we are to save the ***polar bear***, trophy hunting must come to an end.

The Safari Club International and Dallas Safari Club members would have the public believe that if it were not for trophy hunters, many animals would have perished a long time ago, The evidence is quite the contrary. From 2016 to 2020, the estimated number of trophies allowed into the United States was estimated at 700,000. Everything from wallabies to giraffes to rhinos to zebra.

The United States outlawed ***polar bear*** hunting in the Marine Mammal protection Act of 1972 except for Alaskan Natives. Canada still allows the practice for a fee - $50,000. Now that a ***polar bear*** has died of the avian flu, all bets are off. The greatest predator on Earth might not survive the loss of the ice, trophy hunting and the virus that has affected animals all over the world. If the flu spreads, and they continue to go hungry on land, the poor ***bear*** will die out. The ice that once sustained them and cooled the world is going fast. As it goes, so do the ***polar bears*** and, eventually, our civilization.

Cyril Christo is a writer, photographer and filmmaker, with his wife, Marie Wilkinson and son, Lysander.

**Load-Date:** March 24, 2024

**End of Document**