

POLAR BEARS

On August 8th London's *Guardian* newspaper published a distressing photograph of a 16 year old male polar bear that had died of starvation due to lack of ice on which to hunt seals. According to the report the bear had been "reduced to little more than skin and bone." Sea ice in the Arctic is now at a record low due to global warming. According to *Polar Bears International* total summer ice loss in the Arctic equals an area the size of the states of Alaska, Texas and Washington combined.

As if this was not challenging enough the US government wants to add to the problem. US House Speaker John Behner is pushing legislation that would permit commercial exploration and drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The refuge, established in 1960, covers 19 million acres of pristine wilderness. It is the most important onshore denning habitat for U.S. polar bears, containing 53 identifiable dens. We can only imagine the disruption to the lives of these magnificent creatures that offshore & onshore drilling, along with accompanying noise from road and infrastructure construction would bring.

According to the **IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group** in 2010 there were 19 definable population groups in the Arctic region. Of these, 8 were declining and 6 were estimated to be at **very high** risk for future decline.

See the Groups interesting chart of the 19 polar bear population groups here:
<http://pbsg.npolar.no/en/status/status-table.html>

Another group doing outstanding work in this regard is **Defenders of Wildlife**. They are wonderful advocates for animal welfare and conservation in the United States and are well worth supporting: <http://www.defendersblog.org/>

Polar Bears International is an organization dedicated to saving polar bears by saving their sea ice habitat: <http://www.polarbearsinternational.org/>

