Present members of the IUCN/Polar Bear Specialist Group

In Oslo in October 2012 the group agreed on new membership guidelines to secure its independent position in relation to the Range States, or Parties of the 1973 Agreement. All members are now appointed by the Chair, and 35 is the maximum number of members.

The list below is updated per March 20, 2013, and these members are formally appointed for the period 2013-2016.

Dag Vongraven (Chair)

Country: Norway
Affiliation: Norwegian Polar Institute (Senior Adviser)

Dag received his M.Sc. at the University of Trondheim (NTNU) in 1988, and then spent a decade studying the population of free-ranging killer whales off the Norwegian coast. While studying killer whales he first worked as a scientist at the NTNU, and then as an adviser at a the environmental department of the County Governor's office in Sør-Trøndelag. He started working at the Norwegian Polar Institute, Section for Polar Environmental Management, in 1997 where his responsibilities from the outset were wildlife management in Norwegian Arctic, with special focus on marine species, polar bears included. He was invited specialist to the PBSG meeting in Nuuk in 2001, where he was volunteered to create the PBSG website. He became a regular member in 2005, then an interim co-chair in 2010, officially assigned as co-chair in 2011, and then acting chair from 2012, when Erik Born retired. He has been re-elected as Chair for the next IUCN quadrennium running 2013-2016. Since 2010 he has been the principal investigator during the development of the circumpolar monitoring framework for polar bears, now published as an Ursus Monograph, and he has published a few articles in peer-reviewed journals on a variety of issues. He has been deeply involved in the development of programs for circumpolar monitoring of biodiversity within the Arctic Council since 1998, he is active within the CAFF/Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program on many levels, he is a member of this program's marine mammal network, and he works to liaise the PBSG with other relevant circumpolar initiatives.

Jon Aars

Country: Norway
Institution: Norwegian Polar Institute (Research Scientist, Ph.D.)

Jon Aars is a research scientist, and responsible for the polar bear research program at the Norwegian Polar Institute. He has led the annual field capture-recapture program since he started at the institute in 2003, and also a survey to estimate the size of the Barents Sea population in 2004. He received his B.Sc, M.Sc., and PhD (in 1998) at the University of Oslo. Both his PhD and Post Doc work (University of Aberdeen, 1998-2002) focused on demography and population genetics of small rodents. He focused on landscape ecology and in particular how dispersal was affected by habitat configuration and local demography, and how dispersal influenced the population genetics. Now, working with polar bears, population demography is still his main interest. He has been a member of PBSG since 2003.

Steve Amstrup

Country: USA
Affiliation: Polar Bears International (Chief Scientist, Ph.D.)

Dr. Steven C. Amstrup is Chief scientist for Polar Bears International. He also is an adjunct professor at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. He earned a B.S. in Forestry from the University of Washington (1972), a M.S. in Wildlife Management from the University of Idaho (1975), and a Ph.D. in Wildlife Management from the University of Alaska Fairbanks (1995). Prior to joining PBI, he led polar bear ecology research in Alaska for 30 years. He is a past chairman of the IUCN Polar Bear Specialist Group and has been an active member of the group for 32 years. Dr. Amstrup has authored or coauthored over 100 peer-reviewed articles on movements, distribution and population dynamics of large mammals. He is the senior editor of a recent text on population estimation methods. In 2007, he led a USGS research team in production of 9 reports that were instrumental in convincing the US Secretary of Interior polar bears should be declared threatened. More recently Dr. Amstrup led an effort showing polar bears are not unavoidably doomed. In the December 2010 issue of Nature, he and his coauthors showed that preserving polar bears is all about controlling man-caused temperature rise. In 2012, Amstrup was selected as recipient of the Indianapolis Prize, and a Bambi Award for his efforts in animal conservation.

Todd Atwood

Country: USA
Affiliation: US Geological Survey

Stanislav Belikov

Country: Russia
Affiliation: All-Russian Research Institute for Nature Protection (Head of Laboratory, Ph.D.)

Dr. Stanislav Belikov graduated from the Moscow State University in 1969, and was employed by the Central Laboratory of Nature Protection. This laboratory was later reorganized into the All-USSR Research Institute for Nature Protection in 1979, and to the All-Russian Research Institute for Nature Protection after the collapse of the USSR in 1991. His main areas of interest are conservation of biodiversity, establishing of natural protected areas in the Russian Arctic, assessment of impact caused by natural and human-induced factors on the Arctic ecosystems and their biotic components, and finally conservation and management of rare and valuable animal species (e.g. polar bears). Since 1970 he has conducted annual field research on polar bears in Russian Arctic (from Wrangel Island in the far east of Russia up to Franz Josef Land in the west), mainly focusing on ecology, behavioral studies and accumulation of chemical pollutants on polar bears. He earned his Ph.D. in 1982, and his dissertation was dedicated to reproductive biology and behavior of polar bears in Wrangel Island. He is the author or co-author more than 160 articles, including about 50 articles on polar bear. He became a member of the PBSG in 1988, and was co-chair of the group in the period 2001-2005. He is co-chair of the American-Russian Scientific Working Group on polar bears, which was established in support for the US-Russia Polar Bear Commission.

Andrei Boltunov

Country: Russia
Affiliation: All-Russian Research Institute for Nature Protection

Terry D. DeBruyn

Country: USA
Affiliation: US Fish and Wildlife Service (Polar Bear Project Leader, Ph.D.)

Dr. Terry D. DeBruyn is the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Polar Bear Project Leader and is responsible for all aspects of the Service's activities related to polar bear research and management in Alaska.. Terry has been a U.S. Delegate to PBSG since 2008. He received both his M.S. and Ph.D. studying black bears in Michigan's Upper Peninsula. Currently, he serves as the U.S. Delegate to and is responsible for implementation of a bilateral agreement with Russia for polar bears found in the Chukchi/Bering seas; serves as co-chair for the U.S./Russia Bilateral Commission's Polar Bear Scientific Working Group and is the U.S. Representative to Canada's International Polar Bear Technical Expert Group. Terry is a past member of the International Brown Bear Working Group and Interagency Brown Bear Study Team. He has 23 years of bear management and research experience and has researched and managed all three species of North American bears.

Andrew E. Derocher

Country: Canada
Affiliation: University of Alberta (Professor, Ph.D.)

Dr. Andrew E. Derocher is a Professor of Biological Sciences at the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada. He holds a B.S. in Forest Biology (Hon.) from the University of British Columbia (1983), a M.Sc. in Zoology from the University of Alberta (1987), and a Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of Alberta (1991). After graduating, he working with Environment Canada and then was the polar bear research scientist at the Norwegian Polar Institute (1996-2002) before returning to Canada to his current position. He was the past-chairman of the PBSG and a member since 1996. His field research has studied polar bears in the Canadian Arctic, western Russia, and Svalbard over the past 30 years studying. Dr. Derocher has authored or co-authored well over 100 peer reviewed papers on the limiting and regulating factors of polar bear populations, habitat use, effects of harvest, behaviour, predator-prey relationships, ecotoxicology, and the effects of climate change. He is the author of Polar Bears: A Complete Guide to their Biology and Behavior published in 2012 by Johns Hopkins University Press.

Rune Dietz

Country: Greenland/Denmark
Affiliation: Aarhus University (Professor, Ph.D.)

Dr. Rune Dietz is a professor in "Conservation biology of marine mammals" at Aarhus University, Department of Bioscience, Roskilde and affiliated with the Arctic Research Centre (ARC), Aarhus. Rune has since 1979 worked with marine mammals including polar bears, and he has done extensive field work including behavior, ecology, and population dynamics of Arctic and Danish marine mammals using satellite telemetry. He has also been responsible for contaminant studies and biological effects studies from metal and organic contaminants. In addition he has been responsible for the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme (AMAP) assessments on heavy metals and mercury since 1995 and has contributed to the AMAP POP Effect and time trend Assessment. Rune has been responsible for a number of larger international programmes including the IPY (International Polar Year) programme BEARHEALTH, ARCTIC (Advanced Research on Contaminant Transfer, Impact and Consequences) and PELATES (Population Effect Levels in Arctic Top EcoSystems), Oceans 12, TOPSEATED (on multiple stressors and combined effects in the Baltic top predators) and "Species at Risk". Rune has been a member of the PBSG since 2005. He has published more than 200 scientific papers and a similar number of conference contributions and technical reports.

George Durner

Country: USA
Affiliation: US Geological Survey (Research Scientist)

George Durner is a research zoologist for the US Geological Survey, Alaska Science Center, in Anchorage, Alaska. He has an MS from Frostburg State University, Maryland, where he conducted research on the spatial ecology of black rat snakes. George has been a member of USGS's polar bear program since 1991. His research focuses on polar bear spatial patterns, their use of sea ice habitat, and on mapping landscape features used by polar bears for maternal denning. As a member of a team of research scientists in the USGS and collaborators from other agencies, George's primary research goal is to identify and explain mechanisms that drive the response of polar bear populations to changing Arctic ecosystems. George has been a member of the PBSG since 2009, an ex-officio member of the Canadian Polar Bear Technical Committee since 1994, and has been an invited specialist since 1998 for the Inuvialuit-Inupiat Polar Bear Joint Commission meetings on the management of polar bears in the southern Beaufort Sea.

Markus Dyck

Country: Canada
Affiliation: Government of Nunavut, (Polar Bear Biologist)

Markus was recently appointed to the PBSG membership in October of 2012, and attended his first PBSG meeting in Oslo the same year. He began his current employment as a polar bear biologist with the Government of Nunavut (GN), Canada, in February of 2012. Before that, he gained invaluable experience on polar bears, their behavior and ecology through many volunteer positions, and as a polar bear field technician [also with the GN]. Over the years, Markus was fortunate enough to have been involved in studies that ranged from large-scale population inventories to months-long behavioral observations in close quarters. His current position bears the conservation and management responsibility for most of the world's polar bears – of the 19 global polar bear sub-populations, 12 are within or shared with Nunavut. As such, cooperating and collaborating with neighboring jurisdictions as well as with all other co-management partners (e.g., Hunters and Trappers Organizations, Regional Wildlife Organizations, Nunavut Wildlife Management Board, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.) make this job challenging, but exciting. Markus lives and works in the small Arctic community of Igloolik.

Morten Ekker

Country: Norway
Affiliation: Directorate for nature management (Senior Adviser)

Morten received his M.Sc in general zoology at the University of Trondheim in 1984 and was involved in different research projects within topics related to physiology, oil contamination, and diving in marine mammals and birds for a decade. He was employed in The Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management (DN) in 1990, and at present he is a senior adviser in the Marine Division. DN has the national management responsibility for species and habitats in Svalbard and Morten is in charge of marine mammals and birds. He has been a member of PBSG since 2005, and he was an invited specialist in 2001. His current focus is conservation of Arctic marine birds and mammals on a national and international level. He has been the co-chair of the bilateral co-operation with Russian seabird scientists since early 1990, and he is responsible for the development and implementation of the national action plan for polar bears in Norway.

Amalie Jessen

Country: Greenland
Affiliation: Ministry of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture (Head of Department).

After graduating in 1981, Amalie spent a 6 years studying science and society, mostly dealing with interaction between natural resources and management of those, local, regional and international management of natural resources in Greenland at the Centre of Roskilde University. During studying, she spent one year working both in various fish plants in Greenland and working as a voluntarily student at the Department of Fisheries, Hunting and Industry in 1986-1987 while collecting files to master's degree. She did master's degree on the atlantic cod and the management of that species and the processing of the cod in fish plants in Greenland. Amalie got a position as head of Section at the Department of Fisheries, Hunting and Industry in December 1988, Fisheries Department, and in 1990 in the Hunting Department, dealing with all kind of wild life management, including polar bears. Amalie became head of Department on Hunting in 1993 in the latter Department. She became Assistant Deputy Minister in 2000 in the same Department. From June 2002 and until May 2010 she had the position as Deputy Minister for Department of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture. In May 2010 Amalie returned to her position as Head of Department for Hunting, dealing only with all terrestrial and marine mammals and birds and campaign on the use of local natural resources, including polar bears. During the period Amalie attended some PBSG-meetings as observer. Amalie was head of staff dealing with the informal and formal meetings with Canada/Nunavut negotiating on the Memorandum of Understanding on shared polar bear populations in Kane Basin and Baffin Bay between 2000-2009 and until the MOU was signed in October 2009 between Greenland and Canada, where she became Commissioner and head of delegation. She participated in CITES Animals Committee and COP's when polar bear is on the agenda. Amalie became regular member of PBSG in 2010.

Anatoly Kochnev

Country: Russia
Affiliation: Pacific Research Fisheries Center, Anadyr, Chukotka

Anatoly graduated from Irkutsk State University in 1985. He has been involved with marine mammals research in Chukotka, Russia since 1983. During 1985-1989 he took part in the Marine Sealing Survey of OkhotskRybVod (Russian Far East Marine Biological Resources Department). The polar bear became a major scientific study subject during the period of 1989-1999, when Kochnev was a biologist of Wrangel Island State Reserve. At Wrangel Island he was conducted and participated in the programs "Polar bear autumn aggregations" and of "Polar bear dens shore-based counts". He participated in aerial den surveys at Wrangel Island and along the Chukotkan coast. From 1999 he has worked for Laboratory of Marine Mammals Studies in the Chukotka Branch of Pacific Research Fisheries Center (ChukotTINRO). He has been the leader of this laboratory since 2004. He has also been a scientific adviser to the Association of Traditional Marine Mammals Hunters of Chukotka (ATMMHC/CHAZTO). The main scientific interests are ecology, population biology and behavior of polar bear, as well as traditional knowledge and social role of polar bear in the subsistence life and culture of Natives in Chukotka. He participated at the 14th Working Group Meeting of the PBSG in 2005 as an invited specialist, and became a member in March 2013.

Kristin Laidre

Country: USA
Affiliation: University of Washington, Seattle (Marine Mammal Ecologist, Ph.D.) and Greenland Institute of Natural Resources

Dr. Kristin Laidre is a marine mammal ecologist at the University of Washington, Seattle, USA working at the Polar Science Center and the School of Aquatic and Fishery Sciences. She is partially supported by the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources. She received her Ph.D. in 2003 from the University of Washington and worked as NSF-funded post-doctoral fellow at the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources between 2004 and 2006. Kristin's research is focused on studying the behavior, ecology, and population dynamics of Arctic marine mammals, primarily cetaceans and polar bears in Greenland. She is a member of the IUCN Species Survival Commission Cetacean Specialist Group, the Joint Commission on Polar Bears in Baffin Bay and Kane Basin, the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission Beluga and Narwhal scientific working group, and has participated in International Whaling Commission meetings as a delegate for Greenland. She has participated in over 30 field expeditions in West and East Greenland and authored or co-authored over 70 peer-reviewed articles and 2 books on high-latitude marine mammals. She has been a member of PBSG since 2009.

Nick Lunn

Country: Canada
Affiliation: Environment Canada (Research Scientist, Ph.D.)

Dr. Nick Lunn is a Research Scientist with the Wildlife Research Division, Science & Technology Branch, Environment Canada. He has been a member of the PBSG since 1997. He received his B.Sc. and M.Sc. in Zoology from the University of Alberta, Edmonton, Canada and undertook his Ph.D. with the British Antarctic Survey in Cambridge, United Kingdom. He began working on polar bears in 1981 and has been involved in studies of polar bears in Baffin Bay, Foxe Basin, Northern Beaufort Sea, and Western Hudson Bay. His primary research interests lie in polar marine ecology, with particular emphasis on marine mammals. His current research focuses on the ecology, population dynamics, and status of polar bears in relation to environmental change. He is the Project Leader of Environment Canada's Polar Bear Research Program in western Hudson Bay. In addition to his involvement on the PBSG, Dr. Lunn is a member of the Canadian Polar Bear Technical Committee and the Scientific Working Group to the Canada-Greenland Joint Commission on Polar Bear. He is currently an Editorial Advisor for the journal Arctic and belongs to a number of professional societies including the Arctic Institute of North America, the Society for Marine Mammalogy, and the Wildlife Society.

Martyn Obbard

Country: Canada
Affliation: Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources (Research Scientist, Ph.D.)

Dr. Martyn Obbard is a Research Scientist with the Wildlife Research and Development Section, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources based in Peterborough, Ontario, Canada and an Adjunct Professor in the Environmental and Life Sciences Graduate Program at Trent University in Peterborough. He has been a member of the PBSG since the 13th Working Meeting of the group in Nuuk, Greenland in 2001. Martyn's polar bear research is focused on the Southern Hudson Bay subpopulation that occurs in James Bay and eastern Hudson Bay. Recent research efforts included an intensive capture-recapture study from 2003-05, a study of habitat used for maternity denning from 2007-2012, monitoring trends in body condition from 2001-2009, and documenting on-ice movement patterns of adult female bears fitted with GPS satellite radiocollars.

Nikita Ovsyanikov

Country: Russia
Affiliation: Wrangel Island State Nature Reserve

Elizabeth Peacock

Country: USA
Affiliation: US Geological Survey (Polar Bear Biologist, Ph.D.)

Dr. Elizabeth (Lily) Peacock is a polar bear biologist for the U.S. Geological Survey, based in Anchorage, Alaska and Research Affiliate at the University of Alaska - Anchorage. Lily received her Bachelor of Arts in Biology and Russian Languages and Literature in 1996 from the University of California - Berkeley. After working as a bilingual high school teacher, and studying insects, salamanders and wolves on various field projects, she started a Ph.D. in Ecology, Evolution and Conservation Biology at the University of Nevada - Reno. Her dissertation - Population, Behavioral and Genetic Studies of Black Bears (Ursus americanus) in Southeast Alaska focused on black bears using salmon streams on the islands of the Alexander Archipelago. After completing her Ph.D. in 2004, she was teaching faculty at the University of Nevada - teaching General Biology and Wildlife Ecology. In 2006, she moved to Igloolik, Nunavut (Canada), where she worked as the polar bear biologist for the territorial government. There, she focused research on the Davis Strait and Foxe Basin populations of polar bears. Much of her research focuses on population ecology and polar bear conservation and management, but she also collaborates with others on studies in foraging ecology, contaminants and genetics. With a move to the USGS in 2009, her research focused on the the increasing use of land by polar bears in the southern Beaufort Sea. Lily continues to work with polar bears and advises several graduate students. She is also a medical student at the University of Washington. Lily has been a member of the PBSG since 2007, representing both Canada and the United States.

Eric V. Regehr

Country: USA
Affiliation: US Fish and Wildlife Service (Wildlife Biologist, Ph.D.)

Dr. Eric Regehr is a Wildlife Biologist with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service in Anchorage, Alaska. He has been a PBSG member since 2009. Eric studies polar bear demography and how environmental conditions affect the status and viability of populations. His research informs management and policy decisions. He also works with Native Alaskans to promote sustainability in the traditional, subsistence harvest of polar bears. Eric believes that seeing different perspectives, creating partnerships, and dealing with uncertainty in science are keys to long-term conservation.

Evan Richardson

Country: Canada
Affiliation: Environment Canada (Research Biologist, Ph.D.)

Evan Richardson is a polar bear research biologist with the Wildlife Research Division in the Science and Technology Branch of Environment Canada. Evan first started working on polar bears in 2001 and has been involved in polar bear research in several of Canada’s polar bear subpopulations including the western Hudson Bay, southern Beaufort Sea, northern Beaufort and Viscount Melville polar bear populations. Evan’s research interests are broad and include understanding the evolutionary ecology of polar bears, their mating systems, population genetics, habitat selection and the influence of stressors (e.g. contaminants, climate, industrial development) on polar bear populations. Evan also works with aboriginal organizations to try help integrate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into polar bear management.He has been a member of the PBSG since 2013.

Karyn Rode

Country: USA
Affiliation: US Geological Survey (Research Wildilife Biologist, Ph.D.)

Dr. Karyn Rode is a research wildlife biologist for the US Geological Survey (USGS) Alaska Science Center in Anchorage, Alaska. She conducted her MS and PhD at Washington State University focused on bear nutritional ecology and bear-human interactions. Between 2006 and 2012 she worked for the US Fish and Wildlife Service’s polar bear program where she initiated a research program on polar bears in the Chukchi Sea. In mid-2012, she began working for the USGS’s polar bear program. Karyn conducts applied research using body condition, feeding ecology, and reproductive indices as a tool to monitor polar bear populations and their relationships with available sea ice habitat. She also utilizes other approaches to better understand polar bear population dynamics, including studies of traditional ecological knowledge, genetics, demography, and habitat use patterns. Karyn has been a member of the PBSG since 2009 and is also a member of the US-Russia scientific working group and a delegate on the US-Russia Commission.

Christian Sonne

Country: Greenland
Affiliation: Aarhus University (Dr. Med. Vet., Ph.D.)

Dr. Christian Sonne has since 1997 been educated in various Arctic field work logistics in West Greenland, East Greenland and Canada. Has specialized in the biological effects from metal and organic contaminant exposure on internal and reproductive organs (histopathology), skeletal system (including BMD via DXA scanning), immune system (IDT, cytokine and APP expressions), endocrine system (hormone analyses) and blood biochemistry (BCCPs) in predatory mammals, birds and fish. Additionally specialized in surgical field implantations of intra-coelomic (abdominally) and subcutaneously satellite transmitters (PTTs) in various sea bird species. Furthermore involved in epidemiological studies of Danish wildlife. I was invited to join IUCN PBSG year 2005 and since that I have participated in the 4-year-meetings given overviews of the polar bear health activities in Greeland. Took the initiative to establish the IPY BearHealth program with the aim of an trans-Arctic monitoring health program.

Ian Stirling

Country: Canada
Affiliation: Environment Canada and University of Alberta (Research Scientist Emeritus, Ph.D.)

Ian Stirling is a Research Scientist Emeritus with the Wildlife Research Division at Environment Canada and an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, University of Alberta, Edmonton. He has done research on polar bears and polar seals (Arctic and Antarctic) for 47 years, particularly in the areas of ecology, behaviour, evolution, relationships between polar bears and seals, the biological importance of polynyas, and the conservation and management of polar marine mammals and ecosystems. He has authored or co-authored over 260 scientific articles (>215 in peer-reviewed journals) and written 5 books on bears and their ecology for the general public. The most recent (2011) is Polar Bears: The Natural History of a Threatened Species. He has been a member of the Polar Bear Specialist Group since 1974 and was Chair from 1981-85. For his work, he has won several awards, including the Canadian Northern Science Award and the National Conservation Award in the Special Achievement Category of the US National Wildlife Federation, was appointed as an Officer in the Order of Canada by the Governor General, and elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada.

Gregory Thiemann

Country: Canada
Affiliation: York University (Assistant Professor, Ph.D.)

Dr. Gregory Thiemann is a Professor of Environmental Studies at York University in Toronto, Canada. He received his B.Sc. (Hons) from McMaster University (1997) and M.Sc. (1999) and Ph.D. (2006) degrees from Dalhousie University. His doctoral research used lipid biomarkers to examine the diets and predator-prey interactions of polar bears and marine mammals across the Canadian Arctic. After graduating, he held a Killam Postdoctoral Fellowship at the University of Alberta where he studied polar bear habitat use, the effects of chemical immobilization, and the application of ecological data to polar bear conservation policy. In 2008, he joined York University where his research continues to focus on polar bear ecology and conservation, Arctic marine food web dynamics, and community-based monitoring of Arctic marine mammals. He has been a member of the PBSG since 2008.

Fernando Ugarte

Country: Greenland
Affiliation: Greenland Institute of Natural Resources (Head of Department)

Fernando Ugarte leads the Department of Birds and Mammals at the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources (GINR). GINR is the centre for biological research in Greenland, an its primary objective is to provide the Government of Greenland with scientific advice for the sustainable use of the living resources, as well as the safeguarding of the country’s environment and biological diversity. Fernando’s team carries out research and monitoring of caribou, muskoxen, seabirds and marine mammals, including polar bears. He also leads an interdepartmental group within GINR that, together with the University of Aarhus, advices Greenland on environmental matters related to oil and minerals. Fernando is member of the Scientific Committee of the North Atlantic Marine Mammal Commission and has been part of the Greenland delegations in the International Whaling Commission, the Canada-Greenland Joint Commission for the Conservation of Narwhal and Beluga and, and has since 2005 been an invited specialist to the PBSG. He is also member of the steering committee of the CAFF/Circumpolar Biodiversity Monitoring Program and chair of its Marine Mammal Expert Network, under the Arctic Council. Before joining the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources in 2007, Fernando worked with management of marine mammals at the Department of Fisheries, Hunting and Agriculture. He lives in Greenland with his family since 2005. Before that, he worked with cetaceans in Wales, Iceland and Norway. A Mexican Citizen, Fernando holds an MSc on aquatic sciences and environmental biology from the Norwegian College of Fisheries Sciences, University of Tromsø. His thesis dealt with behavior and social organization of killer whales in Northern Norway.

Øystein Wiig

Country: Norway
Affiliation: Natural History Museum, University of Oslo (Professor, Ph.D.)

Øystein was employed as the polar bear scientist at the Norwegian Polar Institute in 1988, and finalized his Ph.D. at the University of Bergen in 1992. He moved to the Natural History Museum in Oslo in 1994, but continued to work on an annual basis with the Norwegian Polar Institute and its polar bear program through 2000. He has since 1993 also been strongly involved in polar bear research in Greenland in cooperation with the Greenland Institute of Natural Resources. Øystein's research is at present primarily related to ecology and evolution of Arctic marine mammals, in particular polar bears, walruses and bowhead whales. Many studies are management oriented. Studies are also related to effects of pollution and climate change in the marine environment. In later years the research has had an increased focus on genetic analyses of recent and ancient tissue samples in order to assess population structure. Øystein also conducts research on the ecology and systematics of terrestrial carnivores by application of morphometric methods. He became a member of the PBSG in 1988, and served as a chairman in the period 1993-1997. He has authored or co-authored about 180 peer-reviewed articles and more than 100 scientific reports.

James Wilder

Country: USA
Affiliation: US Fish and Wildlife Service (Wildlife Biologist)

James has worked with bears since 1999. From 1999-2003, he conducted black and brown bear research and management for the U.S. National Park Service throughout Alaska (including Wrangell-St. Elias, Glacier Bay, Kenai Fjords, Katmai, Denali, and Lake Clark National Parks). He received his M. Sc. from the University of Idaho after leading the first black and brown bear research conducted in Wrangell-St. Elias National Park. He began working with polar bears in 2003, and now works on various aspects of polar bear management and conservation in coordination with the other polar bear Range States, as well as domestic partners. Recently, James's main focus has been on leading an international effort with the other Range States to document and analyze human-polar bear conflicts in a comprehensive manner, and leading the development of the U.S. Polar Bear Conservation and Management Plan in coordination with the other Range States. James also works on polar bear harvest management in Alaska and research in the Chukchi Sea. He has been a member of the PBSG since 2013.

Geoff York

Country: USA
Affiliation: WWF Global Arctic Programme (Senior Programme Officer)

Geoff lived in Alaska for 21 years coming north to pursue a Masters degree in science/biology at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. He has many years of field experience in the Arctic, most recently as a biologist and program manager for the US Geological Survey's Polar Bear Project, the leading polar bear research team in the US, where he conducted fieldwork in the capture and handling of free ranging polar bears, radio telemetry, and the use of FLIR technology for the detection of polar bear dens. He started working for WWF in 2008, where his primary responsibilities include: providing global leadership and coordinated policy advice for the WWF network on polar bears and Arctic species, oversight and leading development and implementation of WWF's polar bear conservation strategy, supporting funding proposals, developing and reviewing policy, and coordinating with relevant WWF bodies, external partners, and donor organizations. As a Flagship leader for WWF, he leads network-wide development and implementation of WWF's strategy for polar bear conservation; undertaking gap analysis of delivery on priorities, mobilizing network support and coordinating updates and revisions of conservation plans; coordinating of a unified WWF polar bear communications strategy and engaging directly in communications activities with the public and media; identification of new sources of funding and development of relationships with new donors; and identification of opportunities to drive stronger conservation measures.

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