

# Operation Arviat Polar Bear Summary Report

This is a brief summary report on the Polar Bear deterrence program from Arviat for the 2014 Polar Bear season.

Arviat, the most southerly Inuit community of about 3,000 peoples located on the western shores of Hudson Bay, lies in the direct path of the fall migration route of the Polar bears from Western Hudson Bay Polar bears population. Polar Bears wait for the Hudson Bay to freeze-up over pass through Arviat, coming from the south going northward. October and November are peak times in dealing with Polar Bears in Arviat, with the first week of November being slow in terms of bear calls may be due to the harvest of the Polar Bears in Arviat. After the first week in November the number of bear calls increase, until the Hudson Bay freezes in early December.

Operation Arviat Polar Bear, led by Conservation Officer Joe Savikataaq JR was the 2nd year in the Polar Bear deterrence program. The 1<sup>st</sup> year (2013) was luring Polar Bears away from Arviat with the use of Seal and Beluga Whale meat. During 1<sup>st</sup> year, various methods were tried including wrapping seal meat in wire fencing, and welding 45 gallon steel barrels/drum with seal meat inside. These two methods were only used once. Luring polar bears with seal meat in 45 gallon drum was stopped, considering that bears might associate with garbage cans in the community which most often are made from 45 gallon drums.

Another method was to establish two luring sites (3 km apart) having frozen blocks of ice with seal meat. I filled 20 liter and 45 gallon drums with water, and suspended seal meat in the water then freezing the water. Once the water was

frozen, the containers were transported to the luring sites. The frozen block of ice with seal meat removed from their containers and was ready to keep Polar Bears away from town. Only small amounts of meat were used in the cylinders of ice.

To help keep the luring stations active and keeping bears away from Arviat and the garbage dump, scent trails were made by dragging seal carcasses approximately 8km south of Arviat along the coast leading to luring site number one then on to luring site number two.

The fall of 2014 was the second year in running for the Polar Bear deterrence program in Arviat. The same techniques were used in luring Bears away from Arviat by having luring stations and scent trails with the added equipment of a live Polar Bear culvert trap to capture – transport- and relocate Polar Bears. The culvert trap was made by Conservation Officer Joe Savikataaq Jr, with all materials donated by the Hamlet of Arviat. The Polar Bear trap has a guillotine type door that closes when the Bear enters the trap and pulls on the bait at the end of the trap.

The Department of Environment hired three bear guards and WWF provided one bear guard, for the months of October and November 2014. Along with the Conservation Officer there were five individuals working twenty four hours a day seven days a week. All four bear guards were given note books to record all deterrence of Polar Bears away from Arviat. For the month of October and November 2014, 249 Polar Bears were deterred away from Arviat. The 249 Bears were not 249 different bears, it was the number of bears deterred away from Arviat, and some were repeats. The Bears that were at the garbage dump and along the coast were not counted in the 249.

The Polar Bear trap was deployed and trapped 14 Polar Bears, which were relocated by truck and trailer 10 kilometers north along the Maguse road that is along the migration route of the bears. All Bears that were captured were marked with a temporary purple die by the use of a dart gun before being released. One of the 14 bears went back to Arviat. All of the Bears were very calm inside the trap.

During the 2014 bear season there were some bears that would go to the trap but not go inside. To rectify that problem, baits were placed outside the trap in small portions and more bait placed at the entrance all the way leading to the trigger. The closer the bear got to the main bait on the trigger the bigger the portions were. That method made bears easier to get inside the trap. Also noticed was that having the entrance of the trap downwind bears were more willing to go in as oppose to having the entrance upwind.

Releasing the Polar Bears from the trap was a simple process. The trailer would be unhitched then a rope tied to the gate via a pulley system 75 feet away with a breakaway line in case a bear charges or attacks the truck, the breakaway line could then be snapped with tension. Bears were released with all personal inside the truck 75 feet away from the trap. Once the truck backed up the gate was lifted open. As soon as the gate opens all bears slowly went out, and headed northward along their regular migration route.

In total 14 Bears were captured, transported and successfully released all without high tech equipment and without the use of tranquilizers.

During the month of November biopsy samples were collected with the use of a dart gun. In total 12 samples were collected, as deterring the bear away from people, houses, and dogs was priority before trying to collect any biopsy samples.

In summary of the 2014 Polar Bear season for Arviat, 249 Polar Bears were deterred away from Arviat, and 14 Polar Bears were captured, transported and successfully released, and over 8000 kilometers driven in patrols.

Report prepared and submitted by Conservation Officer Joe Savikataaq Jr