

**Global Arctic Programme** 

# 2014 WWF-Canon & NPI Expedition

Studying the effect of a warming Arctic on Svalbard's polar bears



# **APRIL 11, 2014**

The group departs from Longyearbyen, Svalbard.

### APRIL 11-21, 2014

While the researchers survey polar bear den sites and fit bears with GPS-enabled collars to study their movements, the WWF crew will be sending photos, videos and stories from the field.

### **APRIL 21, 2014**

The group returns to Longyearbyen.

On the islands of Svalbard, in Norway's high Arctic, warming temperatures and melting ice are transforming the Arctic landscape. Join the Norwegian Polar Institute and WWF-Canon on a research expedition to learn more about how polar bears are adapting to their changing habitat.

The expedition will collect critical data about Europe's most westerly polar bear population. The population on and around the Norwegian Arctic archipelago of Svalbard is facing a future without summer sea ice. In recent years, the researchers have noted changes linked to reduced sea ice - polar bear maternity dens appear to be shifting north, and changes in sea ice are modifying the bears' usual movement patterns.Using helicopter and GPS-based surveying, the team will gather first-hand evidence of the changes coming to Svalbard.

FOLLOW THE JOURNEY AT PANDA.ORG/SVALBARD



Research Vessel Lance will be used for the 2014 WWF-Canon & NPI expedition around Svalbard



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Map with maternity denning positions in Svalbard. Kongsøya is the most well known and most important of the denning areas.

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CONSERVATION IMAGING PARTNER

© 1986 Panda symbol WWF-World Wide Fund For Nature (formerly known as World Wildlife Fund) ® "WWF" is a WWF Registered Trademark The research will take place in April, when polar bear mothers and their cubs typically emerge from dens on Svalbard. The team will look at the islands of Kongsøya, Svenskeøya and and, depending on sea ice conditions, expand the survey northwards to islands like Kvitøya, where denning data is sparse. In addition to identifying denning sites, the research team will fit GPS collars to the female bears, to track their movements.

The NPI researchers have seen some evidence that bears are shifting their denning sites as an apparent response to climate change. Identifying the new denning sites will help develop that thesis. With GPS collars they can establish the bears' favoured habitat, and how it is shifting with the sea ice melt. The researchers will also record the condition of the bears at time of capture, adding to our knowledge of the population and its health.

The WWF and Canon team will collect photos, videos and stories, shared daily from the field at panda.org/svalbard, to bring the climate change story to an international audience.

The research will be ship-based, complemented by helicopter and snowmobile. Helicopters are essential in polar bear research. The bears can cover so much area that locating both them and their dens through any other survey method would not supply sufficient information about population trends, and the impact that climate change is having on those trends.

# PARTICIPANTS

WWF leads on polar bear and walrus, WWF communications staff, Norwegian Polar Institute staff and a Canon photo ambassador.

# ABOUT THE WWF/CANON EUROPE PARTNERSHIP

The Svalbard expedition is the third of three Arctic expeditions funded by Canon Europe. In 2012, the partners mounted the "Sailing to Siku" expedition (panda.org/lasticearea) between Greenland and Canada, and in 2013, an expedition to Russia to collect genetic samples from polar bears and walruses. Canon also funds the WWF-Canon photo library, helping WWF tell conservation stories worldwide through photography.

#### Information

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