

Zoo Polar Bear Helps with Arctic Conservation Challenge

New 'Burr on Fur' technology could help wild polar bears

Sometimes a sticky problem demands a sticky solution. As climate change reduces Arctic sea ice, scientists and wildlife managers need to know how polar bears are responding but that's easier said than done.

"Polar bears are notoriously difficult to study in the wild," said Amy Hash, who supervises the Oregon Zoo's marine life area. "They live in one of the harshest environments on the planet, and observing their behavior is just about impossible."

To help, zoo polar bear Nora has been beta testing the "Burr on Fur" — a prototype tech innovation designed by 3M in partnership with Polar Bears International to give conservation scientists a better way to track wild bears in the Arctic. Traditionally, scien-



Oregon's Zoo Polar bear, Nora

tists have used satellite collars to follow polar bears, but those only work on adult females.

"Adult males can't be collared because their necks are as wide

as their heads, and young bears grow too quickly to be collared," said Geoff York, senior director of conservation at Polar Bears International. "The devices designed

by 3M represent a major potential step forward. They could be used on all types of polar bears and would allow us to safely obtain critical data." The device is

meant to fall off on its own eventually, but with an active bear like Nora, it only lasted several days. Researchers are looking for something that can stay with wild bears for a longer period of time and are trying out different ways to attach the device.

"Nora's a great beta tester," Hash said. "The way she dives and splashes really helps evaluate how effective a technology like this will be. We hope to try again with another 'burr on fur' once there's another good opportunity. We're excited to continue collaborating with our conservation partners, and this is a great way for guests to see some of that important work in action."

As climate change reduces Arctic sea ice, polar bears struggle to find and catch seals, making it harder for them and their cubs to survive. The species is classified as threatened under the U.S. Endangered Species Act, and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Species Survival Commission has designated the species as facing a high risk of global extinction.

A world premiere from one of the hottest playwrights in America!

LAUREN YEE'S

YOUNG AMERICANS

"A talented, smart, and very funny writer." —Chicago Tribune

PORTLAND CENTER STAGE AT THE ARMORY

FEB 11 - MAR 26
BIPOC AFFINITY MAR 17
503.445.3700 | PCS.ORG

"We cannot walk alone."

Martin Luther King Jr.

Volunteers of America®

OREGON

SCAN ME

(503) 235-8655
voaor.org/services

Change Begins with You

We specialize in family safety, substance use disorder, behavioral health, and reentry from the criminal justice system.

Let us help you find your pathway to wellness.