

New research explores scent communication in polar bears

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New research indicates that scent associated with polar bear paws conveys information that may affect the animals' social and reproductive behavior. This chemical form of communication was likely shaped by the environmental constraints of Arctic sea ice.

Scientists worry that this communication may be impacted if scent trails are disrupted due to increased fracturing of [sea ice](#) from climate change.

"Effective communication is essential for successful reproduction in solitary, wide-ranging animals," said Dr. Megan Owen, lead author of the *Journal of Zoology* study.

"Developing an understanding of how communication is tied to the environment may enhance our ability to predict the impacts of rapid environmental change on populations."

More information: Owen, M. A., Swaisgood, R. R., Slocomb, C., Amstrup, S. C., Durner, G. M., Simac, K. and Pessier, A. P. (2014), An experimental investigation of chemical communication in the polar bear. *Journal of Zoology*. [DOI: 10.1111/jzo.12181](https://doi.org/10.1111/jzo.12181)

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