



Press Release

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Together At Last – Henry and Ganuk Introduced at Cochrane Polar Bear Habitat

Cochrane, Ontario – May 6, 2016

After months of careful planning and preparations, polar bears Ganuk and Henry were successfully introduced at the Cochrane Polar Bear Habitat on March 5, 2016.

“Putting two male polar bears together can be risky, but our two bears showed every sign they wanted to be together, so to improve their quality of life and offer the best standard of care, we decided to introduce them,” said Polar Bear Habitat Manager, Karen Cummings.

So how do you introduce a 950 lb polar bear to a 700 lb polar bear? Very carefully! Introductions are meticulously orchestrated to consider every possible “what if”. At the Habitat, Town of Cochrane Operations staff was called in to man fire hoses (used if a bear needs to be deterred), staff members held fire extinguishers, while Bear Keepers manned gates. Veterinary staff attended from Timmins Animal Hospital, just in case of injury and world-renowned Behaviourist, JoAnne Simerson was called in to direct the introduction. A rehearsal was held the day before the introduction, and every device was tested to ensure it would work according to plan.

As it turned out, the deterrents weren’t necessary, but were at the ready for the entire day.

JoAnne Simerson was extremely happy with the way the introductions went. “Polar bears are often considered solitary animals. It surprises folks when they see how much communication they have to use with each other. It’s clear from Ganuk and Henry they are enjoying having each other as companions. Knowledge of polar bears’ abilities to communicate in a shrinking habitat in the wild can clue us in to critical challenges they will have as the ice disappears in the north.

“Having the success of Ganuk and Henry together is great to increase the bears’ activity in play and stimulate their thoughts during interaction,” said Conservation Coordinator, Dylan McCart. “This encourages us to continue exploring new methods to find more information about polar bears to better protect them in the wild.”

Director Robert Buchanan was ecstatic to see the bears together. “The Cochrane Polar Bear Habitat has recently expanded and upgraded its’ facility so these two bears get to play in the largest and most natural environment available in human care. Ultimately, this facility is creating a Canadian legacy of hope for this iconic species.”

The Cochrane Polar Bear Habitat is the only facility in the world dedicated solely to polar bears. It is open 7 days a week from 10:00 am to 4:00 p.m.

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