



Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

"I'll be back."

Inukshuk returns to the Toronto Zoo temporarily for breeding, but is due to return to Cochrane in a few months.

Cochrane, Ontario – January 18, 2013 – As far as polar bears go – love is in the air.

Testosterone levels in male polar bears spike at the end of January and February – 3 times their normal levels compared to any other month of the year. So, since Inukshuk seems to be, er, quite successful at the art of love, the Toronto Zoo is going to be bringing him back for approximately 2 months.

"Ganuk, Hudson and Taiga are proof that Inukshuk – in polar bear terms – is quite the stud muffin," joked Cochrane Polar Bear Habitat Manager, Karen Cummings. "As his hormones are likely speaking very loudly, we're sure he likely only has one thing on his mind these days ... so it's probably best he, ummm, takes care of his, ah - needs."

Although the sadness from the deaths of Aurora's most recent triplets is still felt by Toronto Zoo staff, they were extremely encouraged by her acceptance of the cubs and newly developed nurturing skills. In a press release issued December 10th, 2012, Curator of Mammals, Maria Franke said, "The fact that Aurora was doing everything right this time is a huge step in the right direction".

Breeding polar bears, let alone captive bears, is an extremely tricky business. Females are what are known as "induced ovulators", meaning the act of copulation triggers them to release an egg. That's why, when the timing is right, male and female bears generally remain together for a few weeks.

Adding to the complications is the fact that females, even if fertilization is successful, can somehow delay implantation of the embryo for up to ... get this ... 9 months till they have packed on enough pounds to den and care for cubs successfully.

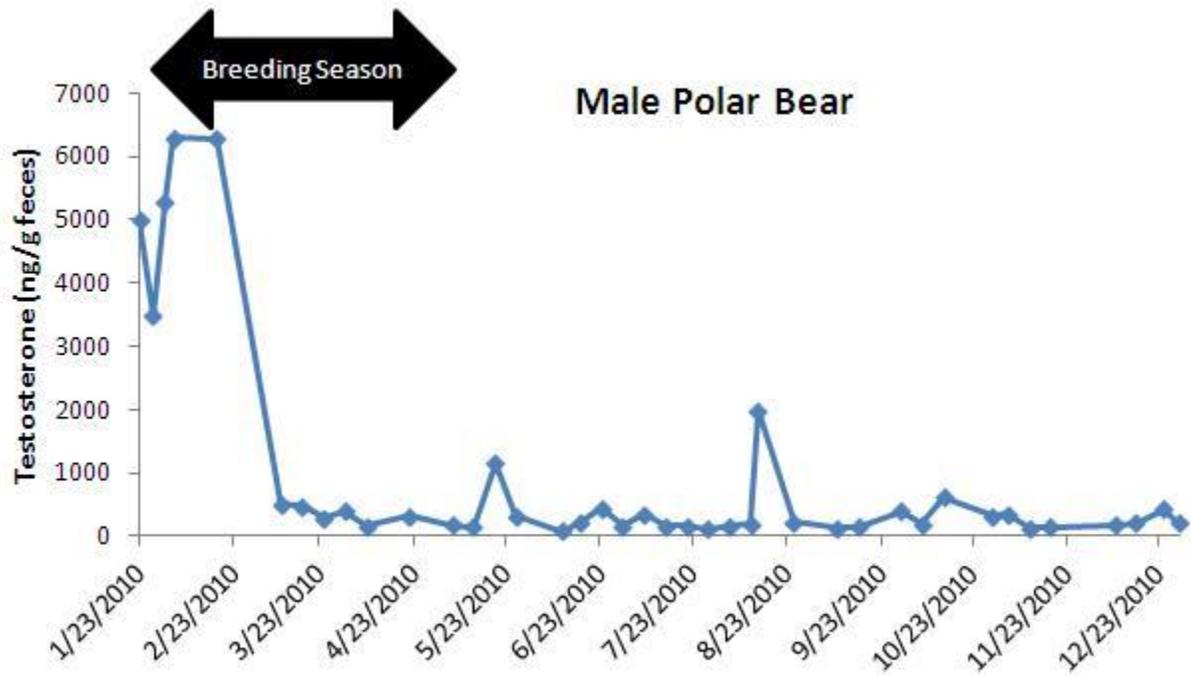
However, although many zoos are working on it, as there still is no sure fire test to tell if females are actually pregnant – at this point, denning behavior is the only tool biologists and zookeepers have to go by.

On top of it all – mortality rates with cubs are still uncomfortably high whether in the wild or in captivity.

"We'll be very, very sad to see him go – even for a few months because we already consider Inukshuk a part of our family – but, it's nice to think that by Valentine's Day, he might have created new baby bears," said Cummings.

The Cochrane Polar Bear Habitat encourages everyone to visit Inukshuk before he leaves and to wish him a successful – and productive – journey.

"Although we're sure Ganuk won't mind ... we're still telling him not to worry, Daddy will be home soon."



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