

NATURAL HISTORY OF POLAR BEARS



THE FREDERICK AND JOAN BARKALOW DISTINGUISHED CONSERVATIONIST LECTURE

APRIL 17TH, 4-5PM, 1216 JORDAN II

REFRESHMENTS IN 1214 JORDAN II FROM 3:30-4PM

ABSTRACT

Polar bears have evolved into a specialized niche and manage to live successfully throughout the circumpolar Arctic. They have unique physiological abilities that enable them to live in an environment that can be both unpredictable and highly predictable at different seasons. Also, their ecology and prey species vary across their range. In particular, they have evolved to prey on ringed seals, which in turn have evolved techniques for reducing predation. From an understanding of the ecology and evolution of polar bears and their prime prey species, we can understand why this large specialized carnivore is particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate warming in the Arctic.

BIOGRAPHY

Ian Stirling is an Emeritus Research Scientist with the Canadian Wildlife Service and an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Biological Sciences, University of Alberta, Edmonton. He has done research on polar bears and polar seals (Arctic and Antarctic) for 39 years, particularly in the areas of ecology, behaviour, evolution, relationships between polar bears and seals, the biological importance of polynyas, and the conservation and management of polar marine mammals and ecosystems. For his work, he has won several awards including the Northern Science Award, being made an Officer in the Order of Canada, and being elected as a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He participates in a number of national and international committees on polar bears and marine mammals and has authored or co-authored over 200 scientific articles and 3 books.

