

A full-page background image showing a vibrant aurora borealis (northern lights) display in shades of green, yellow, and purple over a dark, starry sky. Below the sky, rugged, snow-covered mountains are visible, and in the foreground, a calm body of water reflects the colorful lights and the dark landscape.

WWF GLOBAL ARCTIC PROGRAMME



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Our vision: We are working for a well-managed, biodiverse and resilient Arctic, that is capable of supporting healthy ecosystems and populations of wild species and benefiting the well-being of people in the Arctic and beyond.

Understanding the Arctic in a shifting world

The Arctic, home to unique biodiversity and ecosystems, faces escalating challenges. Over the past four decades, Arctic temperatures have surged nearly four times faster than the global average. Summer sea ice is rapidly disappearing, and scientists project ice-free summers in the coming decades. Thawing permafrost, reduced snow cover, and more frequent and intense wildfires threaten the region's biodiversity. For the four million Arctic inhabitants, many of them Indigenous, the crisis is immediate, impacting their environment, economies and societies. But changes in the Arctic have global consequences: higher temperatures, rising sea levels and extreme weather events affect people and nature worldwide.

Our Arctic commitment

At WWF, our core mission is nature conservation. We firmly believe that safeguarding nature benefits not only species, habitats and ecosystems, but also human well-being and livelihoods.

Given the transboundary nature of many Arctic issues, the WWF Global Arctic Programme takes a comprehensive approach to the Arctic, recognizing the area's vast, interconnected nature. In the coming years, we expect to see a battle for space in the Arctic—an area that attracts competing interests. But nature needs its space to adapt to changing conditions.

We will work to ensure that by 2030, 30 per cent of the Arctic Ocean has been designated as protected and conserved areas, with a strong commitment to sustainable management of the remaining 70 per cent to respect nature's connectedness.

We are committed to safeguarding species that are vital for healthy ecosystems and immensely important for Arctic communities.

Collaboration is at the heart of our strategy. We advocate for effective conservation measures, good governance structures, and the implementation of global agreements. We support Indigenous-led initiatives and engage with industries to minimize their impact on Arctic biodiversity, championing nature-based solutions and climate adaptation. We strive to balance economic development with Arctic conservation. Together, we aim to secure a promising future for the Arctic and its essential ecosystems.

Uniting for Arctic conservation

The WWF Global Arctic Programme's small core team works together with nine national offices across the Arctic and beyond. This collaboration provides a broad view of the region's challenges, recognizing that no single country can address these alone.

Each Arctic national office is responsible for implementing conservation in its own country according to its own priorities, while the programme's core team takes a pan-Arctic perspective and focus, looks ahead to future challenges, creates innovative solutions, develops strategies for the region, and works to shape international processes and policies.

The programme serves as an essential link between the global WWF network and our Arctic offices, promoting teamwork, enhancing expertise, and advancing global conservation priorities.



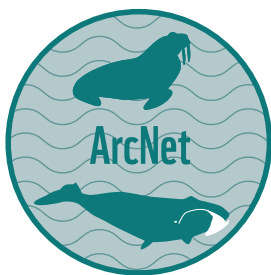
KEY CHALLENGES IN THE ARCTIC

- **ARCTIC ECOSYSTEMS** are changing rapidly due to the climate crisis and increasing industrial activity. Fragmented conservation and governance hinder their resilience. To adapt, we need interconnected, ecologically representative networks of Protected and Conserved Areas (PCAs).
- **KEY ARCTIC SPECIES**, including the polar bear, walrus, narwhal, beluga and bowhead whale, caribou and reindeer, face threats from the climate crisis and industrialization. Climate change endangers entire populations, and some are already in decline. Industrialization threatens them further, and limited knowledge hampers conservation efforts.
- Conflicts between polar bears and coastal communities, due to the loss of sea ice habitat, increasingly risk lives and livelihoods. Protecting Arctic species is essential for the Arctic's health and for Indigenous well-being.
- **THE ARCTIC FACES GOVERNANCE CHALLENGES** due to the climate crisis, geopolitical setbacks and economic development. Disrupted relationships and governance structures, oil and gas exploitation, and competition for resources among Arctic and non-Arctic states pose significant hurdles. A worldwide transition to low-carbon solutions is essential to reduce carbon emissions, but feeding the global demand for the minerals needed for the green economy could have adverse effects on the region. Sustainable alternatives are needed for Arctic communities to embrace nature conservation in their local economies.
- **RISING ARCTIC SHIPPING AND EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES** result in heightened underwater noise, risk for oil spills, and black carbon emissions. Unsustainable commercial fishing adds to the challenge, emphasizing the need to balance economic growth with ecosystem health for the long-term well-being of Arctic communities.



OUR WORK

The Global Arctic Programme is committed to addressing these challenges by focusing on ecosystem and species conservation, governance, and sustainable development. To realize our 2030 vision for the Arctic, we will consolidate our expertise into four cross-cutting pillars of work.



ARCNET: A vision for Arctic Ocean conservation

Preserving the Arctic's delicate ecosystem is paramount. Our goal is to ensure the protection of 30 per cent of the Arctic Ocean by

creating a well-connected, equitably governed network of Protected and Conserved Areas (PCAs). This objective aligns with the goals of the Global Biodiversity Framework, the High Seas Treaty, and Arctic Council policies. It emphasizes the urgency of conserving representative and connected PCAs to benefit societies, cultures and Indigenous Peoples while safeguarding vital species like polar bears, walrus, narwhal and whales, along with their entire marine food web.

ArcNet, launched in 2021 by the Global Arctic Programme, lays the groundwork for PCA networks. It's an invitation to Arctic states, Indigenous communities, scientists, and stakeholders to collaborate. We advocate for translating global conservation commitments into national biodiversity action plans, for championing Indigenous-led conservation initiatives, for advancing Arctic-wide cooperation, and for promoting marine spatial planning across the Arctic Ocean.



ARCTERRA: Preserving the Arctic's terrestrial ecosystems through connectivity

To address the challenges posed by industrialization and the

climate crisis, the Global Arctic Programme is introducing ArcTerra, an initiative aimed at safeguarding at least 30 per cent of Arctic terrestrial regions through a network of interconnected and representative PCAs.

We will chart a roadmap for an expansive terrestrial PCA network across the Arctic, emphasizing ecoregions, landscape connectivity, climate resilience, cultural significance, and the protection of caribou and reindeer habitats.

Collaborating with WWF's global network and Arctic offices, we will develop inclusive area-based conservation principles, regional guidance, and tools for network design. We will make these resources accessible to Arctic governments, stakeholders and rights holders, promoting systematic conservation management.



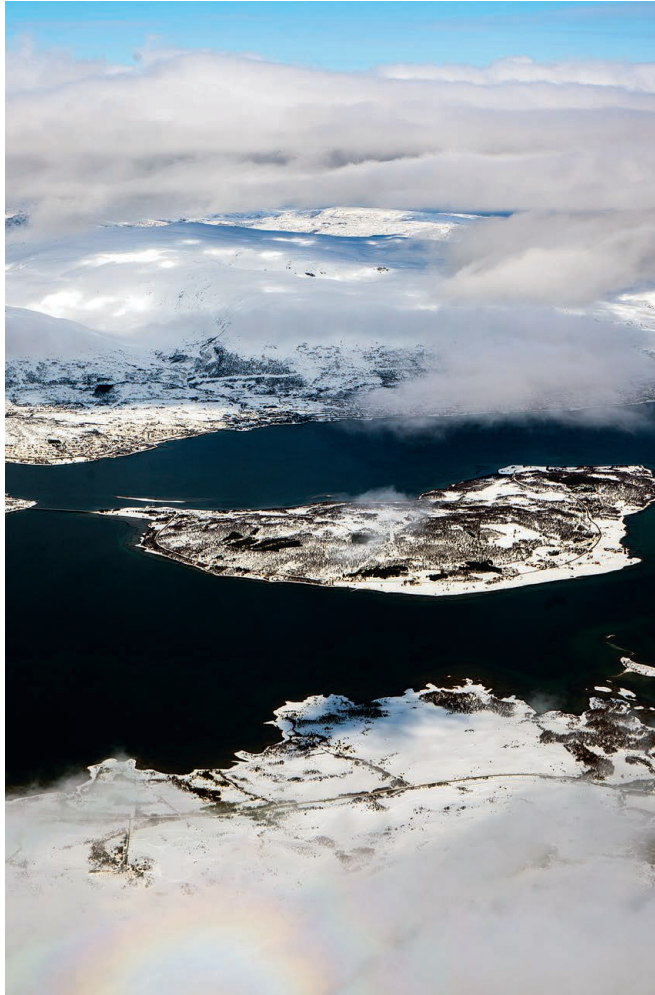
ARCTIC BLUE CORRIDORS: Safeguarding important migration routes

The Arctic blue corridors pillar is dedicated to safeguarding

priority species, including narwhal, bowhead and beluga whales, during their extensive yearly migrations. It promotes ecological connectivity and enhances marine PCA networks.

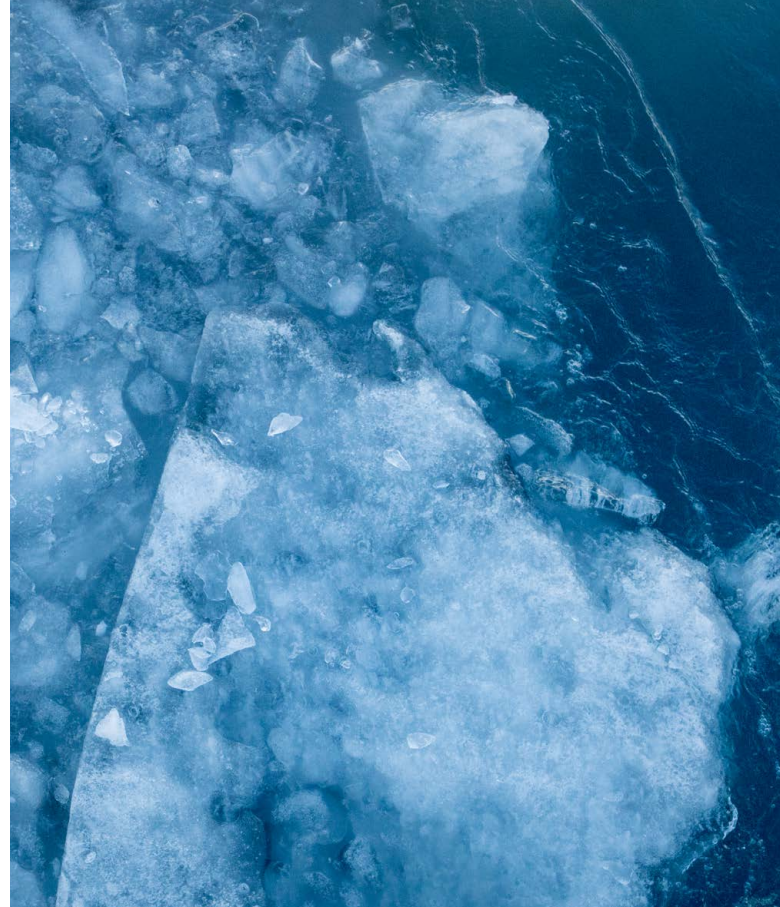
During their migrations, whales mate, give birth and feed. They must migrate between their summer and winter habitats to access the resources they need at different times of the year. However, these journeys are increasingly challenged by shipping and industrial infrastructure, which disturbs the whales and puts them at risk of collisions. These corridors into and out of the Arctic (and within and beyond national jurisdictions) are vital for whale conservation, climate adaptation and Arctic ecological connectivity.

We are collaborating with scientists and Indigenous Knowledge holders to gather insights on migration and to assess threats to make a case for conserving Arctic blue corridors. We are influencing governance forums to adopt protective measures, such as reduced ship speeds and route changes. Through blue corridors, we will highlight the interconnectedness of the Arctic Ocean with the world's oceans.



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THE LAST ICE AREA: An essential Arctic climate refuge

The Last Ice Area, located in the central Arctic Basin above Greenland and the Canadian Arctic Archipelago, is a region

with multi-year sea ice that is also a key refuge for Arctic priority species. This area will be essential in the future for species that rely on year-round sea ice for their survival, such as polar bears, walrus, narwhal, beluga and bowhead whales. The Last Ice Area plays a pivotal role in maintaining sea ice ecosystems and regulating the climate. It also encompasses the North Water Polynya (Pikialasorsuaq), a region of immense importance for biodiversity and Indigenous Peoples in Canada and Greenland.

Ninety-five per cent of multi-year sea ice has vanished from the Last Ice Area over the past four decades. Under high-emissions climate scenarios, the area could become ice-free in summers by 2070. WWF has been working to safeguard the area for more than a decade and contributed to its protection in Canada through the temporary designation of the Tuvaijuittuq Marine Protected Area in 2019.

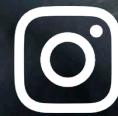
Because the Last Ice Area spans national and international waters, ensuring its preservation demands international collaboration. We will advocate for the highest levels of protection from harmful industrial activities in this important climate refuge, including limits on shipping and icebreaking in the area. We will collaborate closely with governments, Indigenous Peoples, and communities to establish the first marine protected area stretching over Canadian waters, Greenlandic waters, and the high seas.

**OUR ACTIONS IN THE ARCTIC
ARE INTERCONNECTED WITH GLOBAL
WELL-BEING. WE INVITE YOU TO HELP US
PROTECT THIS CRITICAL REGION,
WHICH PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN
THE GLOBAL CLIMATE SYSTEM,
FOR THE BENEFIT OF ALL NATIONS
AND FUTURE GENERATIONS.**

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