

**National Geographic Society -- Pristine Seas
Bear and Wildlife Avoidance, Deterrent and Safety Plan
Canada Expedition 2022**

It is the highest priority to avoid any encounters with polar bears or wildlife, and shooting a bear is the absolute last resort.

Experienced bear guards from the regions will accompany all shore parties and diving teams from the boat throughout the entire expedition. Bear guards will be equipped with weapons, ammunition, flares, and VHF radios. The polar bear and wildlife activity and risk level is continually re-evaluated and appropriate human response will be implemented under the guidance of the bear guards.

Bears and wildlife encounters will be avoided by all means possible. If an animal approaches the team, flares and bear bangers, and warning shots will be used and all people will move away immediately to safety.

Expectations are realistic and the work plan modified or cancelled without question in line with the bear guard's decisions.

Shore landings (where permitted) are carefully planned to ensure safe deployment and recovery with the landing areas evaluated for hazards such as bears, unstable rock or ice conditions, waves, currents and tidal conditions.

Land safety units are deployed at all landings. They contain: Electric polar bear fences, VHF's, spare batteries, first aid kits, tents, sleeping pads, sleeping bags, stoves, food, fuel, water. Each unit supports the land team during inclement weather during the work period or in the event of a delayed pick-up.

If there is a delayed pick up or forced overnight then the team rotate polar bear watch duties to allow rest periods.

Firearms and ammunition are stored in the ship's gun cabinet under the direct supervision of the Captain, Stéphan Guy and the Expedition Leader, Paul Rose.

Each firearm and appropriate ammunition is signed out, and back in, to the cabinet and they are only handled by the polar bear guards and team members with firearm qualifications.

Flares for boat safety and used as polar bear deterrents are checked to be in date and in good condition. A briefing on the safe use of flares is given to all field teams on a regular basis.

Flares are stored in an flammables / ammunition case with access, handling and the logs of use managed by the Field Specialist team under the direct supervision of the Captain, Stéphan Guy and the Expedition Leader, Paul Rose.

All expedition members, including the ship's crew, have been fully briefed on polar bears and wildlife safety and will receive ongoing polar bear safety training during the expedition from our bear guard team.

The pre-expedition briefing has included mandatory viewing of this polar bear safety film: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLWG_73v948&t=1310s

The Parks Canada Polar Bear Safety and Polar Bear Alert programme documents (attached) are distributed to all team members.

Bear Encounters

Bear encounters are to be avoided.

Field teams and bear guards must immediately inform the Expedition Leader when a bear is sighted.

The bear guards must do everything possible to avoid the use of firearms. Carefully moving away is the preferred option.

Firearms must only be used in extreme cases when no other options are available.

If a bear is approaching a group or the landing with no signs of stopping, the bear guard should position themselves between the group and the bear. If a second bear guard is available they should work as partners.

If the terrain and wind allow non-lethal noise making bear bangers should be deployed in an attempt to scare away the bear.

Standard range bear bangers have a range of 60 meters. Alternatively if the bear is at a shorter range (less than 40m), bear guards may elect to use the non-lethal rubber bullets. To prevent undue injury aim, to fire rubber bullets at the large muscle groups in the rump or shoulder blade of a bear. Ensure the bear has a clear escape route before firing non-lethal deterrents.

If the bear continues to approach with intent, and evacuation or retreating is not an option, then the bear guard must shoot-to-stop.

If a bear is shot:

- Ensure safety of the team, check for other bears

- Advise the Expedition Leader who will advise the community and oversee reporting to all relevant authorities
- Return to the ship for debriefing and to submit a full report.

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