

Polar bears at risk from ice loss

Survival of the remaining polar bears is increasingly jeopardized by rapid disappearance of the arctic sea ice, conservation groups say.

Polar bears depend on the ice for hunting, mating and migration, according to the conservation groups Center for Biological Diversity, the Natural Resources Defense Council and Greenpeace.

The groups want the U.S. federal government to list the bears as "threatened" under the Endangered Species Act because of the unprecedented loss of polar ice.

Polar bears live only in the Arctic and are reliant on the sea ice. They feed mainly on ringed seals, which live in the same habitat, said Dr. David Shepherdson, of Polar Bears International, who has studied wild polar bears in Churchill, Manitoba.

In late September, NASA and the University of Colorado released a report showing the Arctic ice cap has shrunk 20 percent since 1979, losing an area the size of Colorado in the past year, the groups said.

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