

Travel Advisory for Eastern Beaufort Sea Coast



Attention Arctic Refuge Visitors: Due to increased risk of polar bear encounters, avoid hiking, camping, or paddling along barrier islands and coastline.

Due to low seasonal ice conditions there are currently reports of increased polar bear sightings along the Eastern Beaufort Sea Coast between Cross Island and the Canadian border, including all of the coastal areas of Arctic National Wildlife Refuge and surrounding the village of Kaktovik. Polar bears are expected to continue to use these coastal areas through October.

Close encounters with polar bears may lead to the injury or death of people or bears. **If you have plans to hike, camp, or paddle along the barrier islands and/or Beaufort Sea coastline, you are strongly encouraged to alter plans to avoid these areas.**

If you *must* travel the coast during this time, expect to encounter polar bears and be prepared to react appropriately. If you encounter a bear at close range, or if a bear approaches you, gather your group together and be prepared to use deterrents (e.g. air horn or bear spray).

Please read the [essential trip-planning information](#) on Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's website, including information on traveling safely in polar bear habitat along the coast. A video about safety in polar bear country is available for viewing at the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge office in Fairbanks. To arrange a time, call 800-362-4546.

Be aware that most of the land surrounding Kaktovik, including the barrier islands, is privately owned. To avoid trespassing, you must use Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act 17b easements to travel to Kaktovik by land. [Maps](#) of Arctic Refuge and information about the use of 17b easements to cross non-Refuge lands surrounding Kaktovik can be found [here](#).

Polar bears are protected under the Marine Mammal Protection Act. Any action that has the potential to disturb or injure a polar bear is prohibited. However, if a polar bear encounter is unavoidable, deterring the bear using non-lethal means such as bear-spray or noise makers is warranted. Additionally, killing of a polar bear in self-defense or to save the life of a person in immediate danger is legal.

If you kill a polar bear, you must report it. You will be required to provide details of the circumstances surrounding the death of the bear, including the deterrence methods you used to de-escalate the conflict in advance of killing the bear.

For questions about this travel advisory and traveling safely in Arctic Refuge, please contact:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
101 12th Ave Room 236
Fairbanks, AK 99709
(907) 456-0250

To report a defense of life killing, incidence of disturbance or harassment, please contact:

U.S Fish and Wildlife Service
Division of Law Enforcement:
1011 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage Alaska 99503-6199
Toll free: 1-800-858-7621

For questions about polar bears, please contact:

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Marine Mammals Management Office
1011 E. Tudor Road
Anchorage Alaska 99503-6199
Toll free: 1-800-362-5148
<http://www.fws.gov/alaska/fisheries/mmm/>

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