

THE WHITE BEARS OF GREENLAND. By E.W. BORN. Nuuk, Greenland: Ilinniuisiorfik Education, Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, 2008. ISBN 978-87-7975-405-8. 128 p., maps, colour illus., further reading, index. Softbound. DKK 186 (~US\$40.00) + shipping. (Also available in Danish and Greenlandic from Ilinniuisiorfik, Postboks 1610, 3900 Nuuk, Greenland, <http://www.ilinniuisiorfik.gl> or the Atuagkat Bookstore in Nuuk, Greenland, <http://www.atuagkat.com/default.asp?lang=uk>.)

This excellent book on the polar bears of Greenland was written for the information of the general public, first in Greenland and then elsewhere. Remarkably, it has been published simultaneously in Greenlandic, Danish, and English to ensure maximum availability of the information to the public everywhere. Dr. Born has conducted scientific research on many aspects of the biology of bears, seals, and walrus in Greenland, Svalbard, and Canada for several decades. The extent of his experience is clearly reflected in the breadth, depth, and up-to-date nature of the information throughout the book. This work follows on his two previous publications: *The Walrus in Greenland*, also written for the lay public, and *The Ecology of Greenland*, his outstanding book for the school system.

The book starts in fairly traditional fashion by giving the reader a wide variety of the standard descriptive information on polar bear topics such as weights and measures, the senses, the reproductive cycle, distribution of the various populations, and the kinds of annual movements undertaken by bears that call West Greenland and Baffin Bay home. In more specialized yet easily readable sections, Born delves into a wide range of subjects, such as evolution (including a photo of the famous hybrid polar/grizzly from the Beaufort Sea), physiology, genetics, and methods of study. In some ways, the most original and thus most interesting aspects are those dealing with polar bears and their importance to the Greenlandic people. There are sections on myths, changing methods of hunting, the passage of knowledge from father to son, and how a harvested polar bear is used by the hunters themselves.

The latter sections of the book are sobering. In an objective manner, the author moves on from the natural history of this popular mammal and the people to whom it is of such great significance to address the dark clouds looming on the horizon. Recent research indicates ever more complex concerns about pollution, the likely need to reduce quotas to allow for sustainable harvests from populations that currently appear to be overharvested, and the overriding threat of continuing climate warming that is slowly but steadily melting the sea-ice habitat the polar bears depend upon for their very survival.

Conservation of polar bears through science, local knowledge, and developing a greater understanding of Arctic ecosystems is a theme that runs throughout the book. Despite all the obvious difficulties ahead, Born ends with a positive, if realistic, statement of hope (p. 122): "It

is very difficult for Greenland to ward off the negative consequences of global warming and pollution for the polar bear on its own. But the bear population can be followed closely and the catch can be adjusted according to developments. There is still a large task to be done in gathering data so that we can ensure that the catch of polar bears is sustainable in an Arctic that is changing rapidly."

Ian Stirling
Wildlife Research Division
Science and Technology Branch
Environment Canada
5320-122nd Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta T6H 3S5, Canada
ian.stirling@ec.gc.ca

HUNTERS AT THE MARGIN: NATIVE PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE CONSERVATION IN THE NORTHWEST TERRITORIES. By JOHN SANDLOS. Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-7748-1363-1 (paper). xxiii + 333 p., maps, b&w illus., appendix, notes, bib., index. Hardbound, Cdn\$85.00; Softbound, Cdn\$32.95.

The standard history of early 20th century Canadian wildlife management in the North recounts that dedicated biologists and managers worked long and hard to conserve caribou, bison, muskox, and other animals, overcoming great pressures that threatened the survival of those species. John Sandlos calls this account into question, describing the contradictory goals and actions of managers of the time. Recently in these pages, I reviewed *Kiumajut* (Kulchyski and Tester, 2007), which examined the same history, using some of the same examples as *Hunters at the Margin*. In contrast to those authors, Sandlos takes a historical rather than a political-science approach to his re-examination.

The result is a compelling narrative that nicely complements *Kiumajut*, providing additional examples of wildlife agencies that pursued the incompatible aims of conserving game populations for aboriginal and other well-being while also promoting commercial harvests and other uses of the same populations. In one sense, this clash is symptomatic of divergent views of the North: an untapped resource awaiting exploitation versus the home of aboriginal societies with long-standing practices of their own. In another sense, the clash is symptomatic of the inability of wildlife managers to distinguish actual crises from their own lack of understanding.

Sandlos uses three main examples to demonstrate that wildlife management practices in the early 20th century were at least consistent in their inconsistency. Wildlife officials found reason to be concerned about the future of muskox, caribou, and bison in the Canadian North. At the same time, they found reason to be optimistic about the prospects for using the same populations to support settlement and economic development in the same region.