



## BRAIDED RIVER

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES

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### ***The Last Polar Bear: Facing the Truth of a Warming World*** New book features stunning photos of Arctic wildlife

There is chilling news for the future of the Arctic polar bear. A new scientific study released in September predicted that two-thirds of the world's polar bears — including the entire population from Alaska — may disappear by 2050 because of thinning sea ice. The extent of this year's ice retreat, a result of Arctic global warming, was unmatched during any period of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Such climate change — seen not only in the thinning sea ice but also in melting terrestrial ice, thawing tundra and warming seawater — is dramatically altering the world of the polar bear. Of the world's 20,000 to 25,000 polar bears, about one-fifth live in Alaska and along the coasts of the Beaufort and Chukchi seas.

Although the polar bear is one of the world's largest land carnivores, *Ursus maritimus* ("sea bear") spends much of its life in and around water. The animal relies on sea ice to move about, using it to find mates, hunt for seals and fatten itself for the long winter season. As temperatures warm up and the ice melts more quickly, the polar bear's ability to find food, mate and reproduce is severely jeopardized.

For the past eight years, wildlife photographer **Steven Kazlowski** has followed and photographed these magnificent creatures, weathering some of the harshest conditions on earth. The resulting images are the centerpiece of *The Last Polar Bear: Facing the Truth of a Warming World*, to be released in February 2008 by Braided River, a new conservation imprint from The Mountaineers Books (\$39.95 hardcover; ISBN 978-1-59485-059-2).

*The Last Polar Bear* combines 235 full-color photographs documenting Arctic animals, plants, birds and indigenous peoples with essays from well-known authors, scientists, conservationists and Alaskan natives, presenting a range of perspectives on the issue of climate change.

**Theodore Roosevelt IV**, great-grandson of the 26<sup>th</sup> president of the U.S. and one of the book's essayists, introduces the complex political landscape affecting this geographic region. Natural Resources Defense Council President **Frances Beinecke** explores the changes individuals can make to reduce their footprint on the planet.

A conservation imprint from The Mountaineers Books

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Additional essayists include cultural anthropologist **Richard Nelson**, environmental journalist **Daniel Glick**, and Alaskan residents and writers **Nick Jans** and **Charles Wohlforth**.

The book also includes several gripping first-person accounts by photographer Kazlowski, who traveled throughout the region by snowmobile, sled, boat and on foot, experiencing temperatures as cold as minus 50 degrees. He accompanied native Inupiaq hunters on whale and seal hunts, and camped for weeks in sub-zero temperatures, waiting to photograph polar bear cubs as they first emerged from their den.

Although time will tell how accurate the predictions of global warming and sea ice loss are, the book's release is timely. "There is a definite link between changes in the sea ice and the welfare of polar bears," said scientist **Steven Amstrup**, lead author of the recent U.S. Geological Survey report on the shrinking Arctic ice and scientific consultant for *The Last Polar Bear*. "As the sea ice goes, so goes the polar bear."

### **National outreach campaign**

*The Last Polar Bear* will be supported by a traveling exhibition of Kazlowski's photographs organized by the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture, Seattle, Wash. A 10-city national author tour and an educational outreach campaign, held in collaboration with conservation organizations including the Natural Resources Defense Council, Alaska Wilderness League and Sierra Club, are also planned.

### **About the author**

Steven Kazlowski earned a degree in marine biology from Towson State University outside Baltimore, Md. He worked briefly in the Florida Keys as a marine biologist before setting out for Alaska to pursue his true passion – wildlife photography. His photographs have been featured in *Audubon*, *Backpacking*, *Canadian National Geographic*, *National Wildlife* and *TIME* magazines as well as in several books. A resident of Seattle, Wash., Kazlowski travels frequently to Alaska and throughout western North America, photographing the natural world.

### **About Braided River**

Braided River, a new conservation imprint from The Mountaineers Books, provides a unique publishing venue for photographers and writers who bring a fresh perspective to environmental issues facing western North America's wildest places. Braided River books reach beyond the printed page, carrying their distinctive voices to a wider audience through lectures, exhibits and multi-media events in collaboration with leading environmental organizations.

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**Note to Editors:** For photographs and complete press kit materials on *The Last Polar Bear*, as well as information on other Braided River books, go to [www.BraidedRiverBooks.org](http://www.BraidedRiverBooks.org). For a review copy, please contact Laura Case at 206-223-6303, ext. 118, or email [LCase@BraidedRiverBooks.org](mailto:LCase@BraidedRiverBooks.org).