The medical benefits of the polar bear for humanity certainly have their importance in our conservation efforts, but these should not be the only factors taken into consideration. We tend to want to protect animals we think are intelligent and possess emotions, such as elephants and primates. Bears, on the other hand, seem to be perceived as stupid and in many cases violent. And yet anecdotal evidence from the field challenges those assumptions, suggesting for example that polar bears have good problem-solving abilities. A male bear called GoGo in Tennoji Zoo, Osaka, has even been observed making use of a tool to manipulate his environment. The bear used a tree branch on multiple occasions to dislodge a piece of meat hung out of his reach. Problem-solving ability has also been witnessed in wild polar bears, although not as obviously as with GoGo. A calculated move by a male bear involved running and jumping onto barrels in an attempt to get to a photographer standing on a platform four metres high.

In other studies, such as one by Alison Ames in 2008, polar bears showed deliberate and focused manipulation. For example, Ames observed bears putting objects in piles and then knocking them over in what appeared to be a game. The study demonstrates that bears are capable of agile and thought-out behaviours. These examples suggest bears have greater creativity and problem-solving abilities than previously thought.

As for emotions, while the evidence is once again anecdotal, many bears have been seen to hit out at ice and snow – seemingly out of frustration – when they have just missed out on a kill. Moreover, polar bears can form unusual relationships with other species, including playing with the dogs used to pull sleds in the Arctic. Remarkably, one hand-raised polar bear called Agee has formed a close relationship with her owner Mark Dumas to the point where they even swim together. This is even more astonishing since polar bears are known to actively hunt humans in the wild.

If climate change were to lead to their extinction, this would mean not only the loss of potential breakthroughs in human medicine, but more importantly, the disappearance of an intelligent, majestic animal.

Complete the table below.

LIVEWORKSHEETS

Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the passage for each answer.
*Write your answers in boxes **1-6** on your answer sheet.*

Reasons why polar bears should be protected

People think of bears as unintelligent and 1 ..... .
However, this may not be correct. For example:

- In Tennoji Zoo, a bear has been seen using a branch as a 2 ..... .

This allowed him to knock down some 3 ..... .

- A wild polar bear worked out a method of reaching a platform where a 4 ..... was located.
- Polar bears have displayed behaviour such as conscious manipulation of objects and activity similar to a 5 ..... .

Bears may also display emotions. For example:

- They may make movements suggesting 6 ..... if disappointed when hunting.
- They may form relationships with other species.

LIVEWORKSHEETS