Introducing Polar Knowledge Canada and Opportunities for Biodiversity Research at the Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS)

Ioan Wagner, Ian Hogg, Donald McLennan, Jean-François Lamarre, Stéphanie Coulombe

Polar Knowledge Canada, Cambridge Bay, Nunavut, Canada

The Canadian High Arctic Research Station (CHARS) is located in Cambridge Bay, southern Victoria Island, in the territory of Nunavut and the central Canadian Arctic. From a regional biodiversity perspective, the station is located near four major Arctic bioclimatic subzones, extending from the Subarctic (E) to the High Arctic (B), and encompassing a range of growing season temperatures. CHARS provides access to a range of freshwater, terrestrial and marine habitats.

CHARS campus will be fully operational in 2018. The Main Research Building provides a range of laboratory and office facilities. The Field and Maintenance Building offers field logistic support, while two triplexes offer accommodation for visiting researchers.

Arctic genetic biodiversity still little investigated, with many cryptic species. CHARS Experimental and Reference Areas (ERAs) are highly interesting places for DNA barcoding and metabarcoding studies, and the focus of major DNA barcoding efforts over the next two years. This will contribute to the accurate inventory of life forms within the CHARS ERAs. CHARS, as well as the regional and local ERAs are ideal places for international experts to visit and work in, as POLAR is strongly committed to developing productive research partnerships.