

# Five Nations Agree to Share Research On Polar Bears at Conference Held Here

The question of whether the polar bear is headed for extinction was not answered.

But the urgency of doing research to answer the question was wholeheartedly agreed upon at historic conference of five circumpolar nations at the University of Alaska September 6-10.

Significantly, the nations agreed to step up research and share it with each other.

They indicated the paucity of information did not provide a basis for sound management policies.

From 1959 to 1963, it was brought out the polar bear kill in Canada increased from 478 to 559; that the U.S. kill from 1959 to 1965 increased from 225 to about 300; that the kill in Norway decreased from 326 to 140 from 1959 to 1963; in Greenland the kill decreased from 1959 to 1963 from 101 to 83. During the period, from 1959 to 1963, the Soviet Union took only ten polar bear cubs a year for zoos throughout the world.

It was brought out that most of the polar bears in Canada were taken by Native hunters, the majority of bears in Alaska were taken by sports trophy hunters using air-

craft; that most of the bears taken in Norway were taken by use of ships or boats.

The conference, which for the most part was closed to the press, put out a press communique with the following findings:

"1. It is the mutual opinion that as polar bears are found not only on lands and seas of nations around the Arctic Ocean but in international waters as well, and that as polar bears move over large areas beyond national waters, polar bears be considered as international circumpolar resource.

"2. It is mutually recognized that each nation, within whose territory polar bears are found, or whose citizens harvest the species in international waters, should take such steps as each country considers necessary to conserve the polar bear adequately until more precise management, based on research findings, can be applied.

"3. It is agreed that all cubs and females accompanied by cubs, require protection throughout the year.

"4. It is the mutual opinion that

each nation should conduct to the best of its ability a research program on the polar bear within its territory or adjacent international waters to obtain adequate scientific information for effective management of the species. It is recognized that each nation will determine the character of its research.

"5. Each of the nations participating in this meeting should give consideration to the prompt exchange of research and management information obtained on polar bears. It is suggested that the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, or similar international organization be invited to receive and distribute information on polar bears submitted to it. It is therefore desirable that each nation designate an agency or office responsible for receiving and distributing polar bear information both nationally and internationally.

"6. It is desirable that future international scientific meetings be called on the polar bear when urgent problems or new scientific information warrants international consideration."