

# Save Ninety-Nine

(From Anchorage Daily News)

**STRANGE AS** it may seem, Nuclear Age man with all his technical knowledge and presumed know-how has allowed the destruction of an animal whose species has been treading the thin ice of extermination since perhaps the Pleistocene.

Today the glacier bear of Alaska numbers an estimated 99. Before the bear, captured in a garbage shed at Yakutat, died of unidentified causes Saturday, Nuclear Age experts said the species numbered 100.

From the time first bear-like animals appeared in the dim past, they have continually developed into individual variations. The glacier bear is an offshoot of the black bear, perhaps trapped against that rugged stretch of southeast Alaska in the Ice Age.

The species became dwarfed by his forbidding habitat and the lack of substantial food, we are told, and his coat changed to blend with its icy home.

Its odd coloring gave it the name of blue bear in some circles. Although this coloring has helped it escape detection of enemies—and this includes man—it has several weaknesses.

The glacier bear is small compared to its first cousins. It has a weak skull and its teeth aren't the best. For these and other reasons this strange animal has failed to survive in numbers compared with the black and other bears.

Perhaps the death of Yakutat glacier bear wasn't the direct fault of Nuclear Age man and his inability to transfer the animal from a culvert cage to a Portland zoo. On the other hand, those agencies to whom the bear was entrusted should evaluate the circumstances of death closely.

Perhaps from this experience and evaluation Alaskans and others will rise to ask protection of the world's most rare bear and find ways to save the 99.

*Ursus emmonsii*, let us hope, will survive because of Nuclear Age man, not in spite of him. —JBN.