

SECTION: Biology, Utilization and Conservation of Northern Marine Mammals

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TITLE: Polar bear movements as determined by mark and recovery.

ABSTRACT

Recovery data have been obtained 9 months to 4 years after marking for 35 of 283 polar bears marked off the Alaska coast prior to 1971. Animals tagged near Point Barrow are recovered there at a greater rate than elsewhere indicating that the population of bears in this area may be partially discrete from bears in other areas. Differences in skull and body sizes of polar bears to the north and to the west of Alaska indicate that populations from these two areas may be partially discrete. Males are recovered at greater distances from tagging sites than females. In some cases bears travel against the direction of prevailing ice drift to maintain their position relative to the land. No single method is effective in all cases for marking bears, and several marking devices should be used to assure identification of animals that are recovered. Marking studies of other nations indicate that there may be several groups of polar bears that are geographically isolated.

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