



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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USE OF AIRCRAFT IN POLAR BEAR HUNTING POSES PROBLEMS

Department of the Interior officials are studying the status of the polar bear now that airplanes are being used more extensively to locate the animals on polar ice at considerable distance from the shore, according to Assistant Secretary of the Interior Ross Leffler.

The Department is seeking ways to provide additional protection if such action is found necessary, but indications are that an act of Congress will be needed to give the Fish and Wildlife Service the authority required for any additional protection, Mr. Leffler said.

In recent months hunters using planes have located polar bears on ice floes in the Arctic Ocean as far as 60 miles from the Alaska shore and then landed to make the actual kill. Because the hunting is far beyond the territorial limits of Alaska there is the jurisdictional problem which is complicated by lack of specific legislation and by the practical difficulties of enforcement.

While the legal phases of the matter are being explored in Washington, the Alaska staff of the Fish and Wildlife Service is seeking more factual information on the distribution and abundance of the polar bear, its habits and other factors which might be important in the management of the species.

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