

FIRST ALL-UNION CONFERENCE ON THE STUDY OF MARINE MAMMALS

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An important place in the marine industry of the USSR is held by the marine mammals, which give to the public economy a large quantity of valuable fat, leather and high quality raw fur, meat products, vitamins and so forth. During the Soviet period, studies on the biology and utilization of the stocks of marine animals have covered a wide field. In different parts of our country special scientific institutes and laboratories have been organized. At the present time, there has arisen an urgent necessity in relation to the increased demands of science and practice, to unite and direct the course of all these studies under one plan, and also to communicate the results already achieved. With this aim the Ichthyological Commission of the Academy of Sciences, its Institute of Animal Morphology, its Zoological Institute and also the All-Union Fishery and Oceanographic Institute (VNIRO) convened the first All-Union conference on the study of marine mammals from 15 to 19 December 1959 in Moscow. About 100 people took part in the work of the conference, representing, besides the institutes mentioned above, the State Planning Commission of the USSR and the RSFSR, Glosglavrybod [= Central Administration for Fishery Regulations and Fish Management], Glavokhota [= Central

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Administration of the Hunting & Trapping Industry], the Arctic Institute for Fishery Industry and Oceanography (PINRO), the Sakhalin Combined Institute of the Siberian Division of the Academy of Sciences, the Crimean Pedagogical Institute, the all-Union Agricultural Institute for Extension Courses (VSKhIZO), Voronezh and Moscow Universities, the Astrakhan Game Reserve and the Magadan and Odessa Sovnarkhozy [= Councils of National Economy].

G.I. Nikol'skii read a message to the participants of the conference from the chairman of the Ichthyological Commission of the Academy of Sciences E. N. Pavlovskii. A member of the State Planning Commission of the USSR, Minister of the USSR A. A. Ishkov came forward with a paper on prospects for development of the sealing and whaling industry of the USSR, following which S. E. Kleinenberg (Institute of Animal Morphology of the Academy of Sciences) gave a detailed historical account of the development of research on marine mammals in our country and on the seven-year plan for these studies.

V. A. Arsen'ev (VNIRO) reported on the distribution of large whales and on the possibility of a whaling industry in the Bering Sea. Papers by E. N. Betesheva and E. I. Ivanova (Institute for Animal Morphology) reported on the feeding and morphometry of whales caught in Far Eastern seas. V. A. Zemskii (VNIRO) reported on the lifespan of fin whales and the periodicity of their reproduction, V.A. Arsen'ev on the lesser rorquals of the Antarctic, M. N. Tarasevich (VNIRO) and R. Sh. Khuzin (PINRO) on the biology of the beluga and prospects of development of the industry for them in the European north, and M. M. Belkovskii (Magadan Sovnarkhoz) on the sealing industry of Chukotka. The

attention of the participants of the conference was drawn to the unsatisfactory state of the stocks of walrus and to some increase in the numbers of gray whales.

K. K. Chapskii (Zoological Institute of the Academy of Sciences) spoke on problems of systematics and zoogeography of fur seals. S. V. Dorofeev (VNIRO) reported some results of study of fur seals of the North Pacific. V. I. Badamshin (Gur'ev Sovnarkhoz) reported on the stocks of Caspian seals and suggested a basis for their rational use. A paper by L. A. Popov (VNIRO) discussed problems of the biology and fishery of the hood seal—a new object of the Soviet seal fishery. E. A. Tikhomirov (TINRO) threw light on the little known question of the distribution and migrations of the harbor, bearded, ringed and ribbon seals in the Okhotsk Sea.

Two papers dealt with the sea otter: A. M. Nikolaev (SakhNII) considered some peculiarities of the biology and distribution of the animal while I. I. Barabash-Nikiforov (Voronezh University) proposed beginning studies on the acclimatization of sea otters on the Murman coast. In discussion the majority of the participants favored reacclimatizing the sea otter within the limits of its former range, and it was decided to press for the creation of a special sanctuary for sea otters on one of the Kurile Islands.

S. L. Delyamure (Crimean Pedagogical Institute) described the significance of helminthological studies and appealed for further extension of these studies and the holding of helminthological gatherings among specialists. Papers by A. S. Scriyabin (Crimean Pedagogical Institute) and Yu. V. Kurochkin (Astrakhan Game Reserve) were

devoted to the helminthofauna of marine mammals of the Pacific Ocean and of Caspian seals.

Papers were also read on the functional morphology of the organs of breathing of toothed whales and on their olfaction by A. V. Yablokov (Institute of Animal Morphology) on the determination of age of baleen whales from the ear plug by V. A. Zemskii on the development of teeth and the determination of age in the sperm whale by A. A. Berzin (TINRO) and on a method for determining the age of harp seals and its relation to sustained yield of the fishery by M. Ya. Yakovenko (PINRO). Papers by V. M. Bel'kovich (Institute of Animal Morphology) and A. S. Sokolov (Zoological Institute) were devoted to peculiarities of the blood supply and heat exchange through the skin of aquatic mammals. V. E. Sokolov (Moscow University) reported on the determination of the phases of the sexual cycle of dolphins by the method of vaginal smears. An animated discussion took place on methods of age determination in baleen and toothed whales.

In the resolution of the conference it was noted that results attained in the study of the biology of marine mammals did not satisfy contemporary needs from the standpoint of determining stocks of marine animals and developing the industry for them rationally, The biology of the majority of hunted species was insufficiently known questions of the determination of numbers were not developed, questions of physiology were poorly known, threats of over-exploitation existed for certain species, and the raw material obtained was poorly utilized.

The conference considered it necessary to strengthen measures protecting these animals and regulating their industry on the basis of systematic determination of numbers and detailed knowledge of their biology. It was necessary to press for a large scale marking of animals. It was also necessary to broaden the sphere and periods of investigation, extending them outside the regions and seasons of the industry and obtaining for this purpose special research ships in the North, the Far East and the Antarctic, The necessity was stressed for the establishment of oceanaria for carrying out experimental work. Such oceanaria would best be set up in the Black Sea and in the Far East, and should combine both experimental work and a wide propaganda for scientific knowledge among the people.

In the resolution of the conference it was also considered necessary to expand the training of groups of specialists in Universities and in the Graduate Student Body of the Academy of Sciences, to strengthen the laboratories in the Polar (Murmansk) and Pacific (Vladivostok) Institutes, and to establish new laboratories for marine mammals in Kaliningrad and Odessa.

The importance was acknowledged of calling regular Symposia on the more important immediate problems of the biology and industry of marine mammals.

The meeting called for the cooperation of investigators and establishment of working contacts between them.

The next conference was planned for 1962.

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