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Robert Elsner, interviewee

Karen Cedzo, interviewer

1981

Series: University focus series

Beginning of tape has a spotted seal pup making sounds. The six-month old pup has been in the home of Robert Elsner since mid-April. The seal pup came from the sea ice on the Bering Sea. Robert Elsner is a participant in a project studying marine mammals. It is part of a joint Soviet-American project [US/USSR Agreement on Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection]. The project has been going since 1973 and work with seals and other marine mammals is part of that project. Elsner has been involved with the project since it began. It has allowed them to share problems and study of conservation and management of various species of marine mammals with the Soviet Union. They have had an interest in joint activities in the Bering and Chukchi Seas where there are some of the marine species which migrate back and forth. He has been studying diving physiology of seal species which live along the coast of Alaska. He said the physiological events that take place when the seal dives are very similar to what humans or other land animals experiences during exposure to asphyxia so that the model provided by the diving seal is a very useful one in the study of physiology and pathology of that condition. Research on animals is often misunderstood and Elsner points out that the seal pup will be kept for a number of years. He said it is their intention to work with the seal pup for several years. It will be used in studies of physiology which do not involve surgery or other kinds of intervention. It will also be used in study of techniques the seals use in navigating under frozen sea ice in order to find breathing holes. Elsner also researches special adaptations of the seal and the circulation of blood during diving. Elsner said recently they have made some new discoveries which they hope may have some bearing on human properties. Elsner has been with the Insititute of Marine Biology since 1973. He has a federal license to capture and keep seals in captivity. The seal pup will take up residency on campus.

Karen Cedzo talked about the campus calendar and activities