



UNLOADING BISON AT FAREWELL—The Air National Guard C-123 aircraft is being unloaded at Farewell of bison transplanted there. Eighteen of the huge animals were successfully transported after much difficulty.

Eighteen Big Delta Bison Transplanted Via Aircraft

The Alaska Department of Fish and Game has successfully captured and transplanted 18 healthy bison from the Big Delta herd to Farewell, Alaska, located 250 miles southwest of Fairbanks, according to Bill Griffin, Game Biologist, Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Fairbanks.

If all goes well, these animals will form the nucleus for a future herd of these unique animals.

Forty animals were captured August 3 on the Delta River near Delta Junction. Blood samples were tested and all animals were declared free from disease by Dr. White, United States Department of Agriculture, stationed at Anchorage.

Five males and 13 females were selected, and after considerable difficulty placed in wooden crates and moved by truck to the Big Delta Army Air Field. The Air National Guard brought in a C-123 aircraft from Anchorage and flew the animals to Farewell in two trips, August 10 and 11.

All animals arrived safely, and all were in good condition when released. One two-year-old cow had a stiff neck from lying in a cramped-up position for ten hours, but is expected to recover, said Griffin.

Griffin said shipping bison by air is not the easiest task in the world, and many things must be considered before undertaking an operation of this type. One of the important considerations is the weight of the animals. Two of the animals plus crate weight rocked the scales at 1,700 pounds.

Griffin highly praised the Fort Greely Army personnel for providing a wrecker to lift the heavy crates from the trucks, and military police to assist in controlling traffic created by more than 800 spectators who converged on the scene

after the animals were captured.

Griffin said without the assistance of the Air National Guard, the whole project would have been virtually impossible.

As with all transplant projects, these animals will be closely watched for the first year to determine how well they adapt to their new home.

5-MEMBER COMMISSION . . .

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are concerned, the situation is already approaching bitter stalemate."

Airstrip Need Cited

The commission even went so far as to recommend the feasibility of construction of an airstrip on St. George be looked into. The St. George people for many years has urged that an airstrip be built but their pleas have gone unheeded with the claim that constructing an airstrip would be too costly.

The commission report states:

"So far as can be seen at present, St. George Island rookeries will continue to be the breeding ground of one-fifth of the total seal herd. To continue annual harvests of St. George Island seals will require continued maintenance of substantial installations on that island — skin-curing plant, power generating facility, warehouse and oil storage tanks, dormitory for seasonal work force, trucks and some other heavy equipment.

St. George to Continue

"Caretaker personnel will have to be on St. George throughout the year, not only to maintain the installations; but also to protect the Government's property from looting and vandalism.

"Complete 'phasing out' of that

community is therefore not contemplated. What would be done, in any event, would be to phase it down to much less than is there today.

"The isolation of St. George Island in this age of air transportation may not be as formidable as it has been. Vertical-lift aircraft are now commonplace elsewhere, and new types of fixed-wing aircraft, operable from very short runways, are becoming available. An up-dated assessment of the possibilities for inter-island air transportation — under Bureau of Commercial Fisheries operation, if not by private air carrier — is needed.

Air Linkage Desirable

"Such air transportation linkage of the two islands would be highly desirable, regardless of whether the village remains as it is or is converted to a base for seasonal sealing operations.

"If it is the Government's policy, deliberately to reduce the number of people residing on the Pribilof Islands, that policy should be explicitly stated and then considered on the basis of whatever merits it may have."

"The economic and financial information that apparently would justify the conversion of St. George to a seasonal operations base has not been available in sufficient detail for study by the people most concerned.

Ancestral Home

"Until it is made available in clear and understandable form, many persons will remain unconvinced that any such change should be made. And even after that is done, there will still be some who will not want to leave the community that has been their ancestral home for almost 200 years. Such an attitude is readily understandable and must be regarded with due respect.

"The problems involved in getting people voluntarily to move from St. George are more difficult and delicate than the Bureau of Commercial Fisheries may have realized," the report concludes.