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Island, Alaska

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Photographs of Pribilof rookeries from camera stations

I have recently studied two sets of rookery photographs, one taken in 1948 by E. C. Johnston and the other taken in 1960 by Carl Hoverson, Roy Hurd, and Ford Wilke. The areas occupied by breeding seals in the two years cannot be compared. C. Howard Baltzo (in conversation) earlier expressed the same opinion. Emphasis seems to have been placed on comprehensive coverage of the rookeries at the expense of comparative coverage. Principal criticisms of the 1948 versus 1960 sets are as follows:

1. The old 5 X 7 Press Graflex used by Johnston was in very poor condition and the pictures it took were not sharp.

2. At least two cameras (2-1/4 X 2-1/4 and 4 X 5) were used in 1960, and possibly a third. None had the same focal length as the old Graflex. As a result, the perspectives are unlike.

3. The 1948 and 1960 sets were not photographed on corresponding dates, and in some instances were 11 days apart. This is an important difference in the latter half of July when rookery patterns are changing rapidly.

4. Mediocre records were kept. The taking of the 1925 set was not mentioned in the published annual report of the fur seal industry for that year. I have found no description of the modern camera stations, though some 1898 charts show the location of a few. Photographs were evidently made in 1893, 1894, and 1895; again in 1905 and 1906; and not again until 1925.

Land photography could be worthwhile for comparative purposes, and I would suggest the following changes in order to standardize and streamline the procedure:

1. Take photographs from six strategic stations only (or eight stations if St. George Island is to be included).
2. Take them every year during the bull count, starting on Reef on 10 July.
3. Take them from stations selected as being on high ground, on permanent rocks rather than on tripods, and on sites facing smooth-surface rookeries. A list of stations is appended, with 1948 photographs taken from the eight proposed stations. (These prints need not be returned; they are from a broken set.)
4. Use a tripod-mounted 4 X 5 camera with focal length of 6 inches (15 cm). This is the normal lens for many 4 X 5 cameras, including the Crown Graphic now on St. Paul Island. Take all exposures with the longer dimension of the camera vertical. Since all the photos will be panoramas, this will give wider coverage and opportunity for cropping. Ignore the horizon, which is often not visible anyway, and take all photos with the camera horizontal.
5. Use panchromatic, slow-to-medium sheet film; not film pack.
6. Carry a list of the stations and a set of previous (1965?) photos mounted in panorama form and covered with protective plastic, so that current photos can be taken of the same landscape.
7. File the negatives with the prints in Marine Mammal Biological Laboratory file No. 7.04.04. (I do not know where the 1925 or 1948 negatives are stored; presumably in Washington.)

RECOMMENDED LAND CAMERA-STATIONS^{1/}

| Station | Exposure numbers in 1948 and 1960 series ^{2/} | Explanation |
|-------------------------|--|---|
| Reef E | 7-10 | 5-exposure pan, with left exposure centered on first (NE) tower. |
| Gorbach B ₂ | 17-18 | 3-exposure pan, with left exposure centered on columnar-lava sea cliff. |
| Polovina A ₂ | 31-34 | 5-exposure pan, with right exposure centered on first (SW) catwalk. |
| Vostochni D | 51-54 | 5-exposure pan, with right exposure centered on Hutchinson Hill catwalk. |
| Kitovi D ₁ | new | 2-exposure pan joining at the head of the small bight. This is a new station to be selected in 1965 at a recorded distance and direction from the Observation Hut ("Bomb Shelter"). |
| Kitovi C | 106 | 2-exposure pan joining at Rock 14. |

^{1/} It is proposed that a set of photographs according to the following schedule be taken in September 1965 in order to establish a standard view from each station.

^{2/} For example, four exposures (nos. 7-10) covered this panorama in 1948 and 1960. With a different lens, however, fewer or more exposures might be necessary to achieve similar coverage.

ST. GEORGE ISLAND (OPTIONAL)

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|-----------------|---------|--|
| Staraya Artil A | 113-114 | 2-exposure pan joining at tower. |
| Zapadni A | 115-116 | 2-exposure pan with left exposure centered on E end of bay. If necessary, because of extension of seals eastward, add a third exposure at the right. |

If you think it advisable to continue photography from land stations on a limited basis, I would suggest that you do the following in 1965:

1. Visit the six stations on St. Paul at any time during the summer or fall when visibility is reasonably good.
2. Photograph each station from N, E, W, or S and describe in terms such as "rock with white-painted D."
3. Take standard reference panoramic photographs as outlined above.
4. Arrange to have station Polovina A₂ raised about 6 feet by dumping two truckloads of large boulders on it. Same for Staraya Artil A.
5. Bring to Seattle at the end of summer the Crown Graphic so that we can have it cleaned and adjusted. The present spring-held "Graflex" back is stiff and awkward; it should be replaced with a modern "Graphlok" back. A bubble-level should also be added.

Victor B. Scheffer

Attach: 8 photographs from eight 1948 camera stations

cc: R.O.