

1920

NAT/SEA/1 # 15

Repts	Sealing
	Our Seal
No.	19

C.S.

S.W., West Island

SUBJECT.

1920

7th January

Previous Paper.

Dundas report on inspection of Our Seal
Rookery, Lasa Islands, and a note
on Sea-lions.

MINUTES.

1

N.2.

Submitted in duplicate - Mr Hamilton
informs me that he has handed the original
copy direct to the -

T.W.

7.1.20.

Report forwarded to Sec. of State
under cover of despatch h^o 21 of
Do. 2. 20.

T-R. 87.

C.S.O.

Returned with number
2400

19.12.20

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Subsequent Paper.

525/22

19/20

Colonial Secretary's Office.

Stanley.

①

7. Jan. 1920



Sir,

I have the honour to present herewith a report on the Fur Seal of Elephant Jason, a note on the protection of seal in the Falkland Islands and another on the subject of the Sea Lions.

In accordance with the instructions of His Excellency The Administrator I began the journey to Elephant Jason on November 16:1919. The journey to Hi Iside, where I spent the night ^u occupied about five hours. Next day Darwin was reached in about ten hours, the weather being extremely bad.

The journey from Darwin to Egg Harbour and from the latter place to Port Howard took about four and six hours respectively and took place on November 21.

The 22nd. Having been spent at Port Howard, I was able to leave it on the 23rd. for Hill Cove, which is about eight hours' ride distant.

On the 24th. I proceeded to Dunbar, about three and a half hours' ride from Hill Cove, and thence to Long Creek, having the signal fires for the Carcass schooner. This vessel did not appear that day, but I was eventually able to go over to Carcass in her on the 27th.

Next morning I made an unsuccessful attempt to reach the Jasons and did eventually do so on the 12th of December after being out all night in the schooner.

The report on the Fur Seal contains the account of proceedings on December 12.

I remained on Carcass until the morning of the 17th. in order to prepare the specimens taken for the sealing investigation, and on December 17th. went over to Dunbar in the schooner in about four hours. From Dunbar I rode to Foy Cove again about three and a half hours.

Next day after five hours' ride I reached Chartres and on the 19th. proceeded to Fox Bay to catch the F.I. Company's

schooner "Ewendoline" which I did with ease. The ride from Chartres to Fox Bay occupied about five hours.

The schooner was weather bound on the 22nd, but left Fox Bay at 6.30 a.m. on the 21st, arriving at Stanley on December 22nd., being a out thirty hours out from Fox Bay.

Under the conditions obtaining at present it seems to be impossible to travel in the Falkland Islands without numerous irritating delays. Some of the factors in this are capable of improvement, but others, such as the weather must be permanent.

I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

J. Erik Hamilton

Magistrate, West Falkland.

To
The Honourable Colonial Secretary.
Stanley, Falkland Islands.

REPORT ON A VISIT TO THE FUR SEAL ROOKERY IN
THE JASON ISLANDS.

In about four hours from the time when we left Grand Jason we came up to the straits between Elephant and South Jason Islands, the intervening water like all the seas round the Jasons having strong currents and tide rips. The wind at this time was Westerly and so favourable for approaching Elephant Jason and the Seal Rock from the outside. The inner Jasons are far more exposed from the open ocean than from the West Fahliland.

During the previous evening I had heard the distant calling of one or two fur seal, but saw none until we were about one mile from the rock.

The "Seinen Vibeck" lay to about three quarters of a mile from the rock, and when Mr. J. Jansen, his brother and myself were ready to row over to the rock in the dingy the skipper was told to try and avoid drifting too far to the N. E.

The current between Elephant and South Jasons was setting in that direction at this time, the wind being with it and very light. The current here is estimated by Mr. J. Jansen to have a speed of from three to six knots.

The Seal Rock is the last of a high reef running South-West from the southern end of Elephant Jason and is perhaps a mile from that island. There are two smaller rocks nearer the main island and a rocky peninsula on Elephant Jason itself ~~apart~~ from a distance there seem to be four rocks, whereas there are only three; in spite of this the Seal Rock is sometimes called the Fourth Rock.

Landing was not particularly difficult since there was very little swell, not more than two or three feet. The landing place is a somewhat smooth rock, sloping rather steeply into the water and partly covered with short and slippery seaweed.

The Rock is about six hundred yards long and two hundred broad towards the Eastern end. It has approximately the

form shown in the rough sketch attached.

The entire reef is composed of very smooth fine grained rock, probably quartzite, and the general surface slopes up from South-East to North West, for in, on the NW side a perpendicular cliff having a maximum height of about a hundred feet. The ^{the} surface of the surface may be compared to that of a rough ^{of granite} heap of granite, there being very numerous & more or less flat pieces broken up and enclosed by little cliffs a few feet high.

The approximately horizontal faces look towards the SE, and perpendicular to the SE, but there are transverse cliffs as well, running at right angles to the length of the reef.

As the boat approached the reef from the South a large number of seals could be seen hurrying down from the reef into the water; they appeared greatly interested in the boat, swam in close up to it and jumped three or four feet into the air, apparently to see it the better; they exhibited no fear at all.

On landing the animal nearest the edge of the rockery hurried into the water, and resolved to walk to the West point of the reef so as to take a survey of the whole. Mr. J. Hansen was with me and we found our march bulls were ~~apparently~~ to be extremely fierce, any attempt to pass through the rockery being greeted with roars and snarls and threatening movements, which did not become less as we approached the animals.

On account of the very broken surface of the reef and its smooth character progress is very slow for man, and it is necessary to remove one's boots to get any foothold at all.

The seal on the other hand can move quickly, two bulls seen fighting, were seen within round one another snarling and snapping in the same way as dogs do when fighting.

After several attempts to cross the reef in different directions we ~~was~~ that there was no chance of walking through the rockery unharmed unless we could by some means dispose of one ^{or more of them} ~~of the~~ bull seals, and I was extremely unwilling to kill any if it could possibly be avoided. It was not possible to delay on the reef owing to the chance of the "Broken Piece" being swept out of reach by the current so I determined to shoot one bull which seemed to be the only one barring the way at one point. After several attempts to make his move which had the effect of making him come toward

us instead, I shot this animal, although with considerable reluctance. To my very great regret I found that the death of this bull only allowed a short distance to be covered, the ^{decided} nature of the ground having ^A led us to the number of bulls in the proposed pass. It was now quite clear that it would be possible to walk over the rock only if a large number of the bulls were killed, an idea which could not be entertained.

We therefore came back to the seal, taking with us a young seal which I had shot on the edge of the rockery for more minute examination.

The sea being still quite calm we were able to land on the western, seaward end of the rock with ease. At this place the state of affairs was quite different; there were no pups, but a mixed herd of all sizes. The adult bulls here were few in number and showed none of the ferocity exhibited by the barren bulls.

It is my opinion at present that this part of the rock is frequented by the non-breeding part of the herd, and may be found to correspond to the bachelor hauling grounds of the Prichard seal herd. Whether this is the case could only be decided by the taking of a fair number of seal from this part of the rock. In order to test this idea I here shot two small seal, selected at random; one was a young male and the other a virgin female. The presence of the latter does not prove that females were present in any great numbers, they occur occasionally on the bachelor hauling grounds in Prichard. Mr

After spending some time on this part of the rock we were compelled to leave, and rode ^{past} past and partly round the two middle rocks of the series of which the Seal Rock is the fourth, no seal were seen on these, although they have occurred there in the past.

Two miles farther on on the coast of Elephant Jason we came to the place where there was a breeding ground at one time.

It was destroyed by the seal poachers and we saw only two seal on it which were quite obviously not breeding.

I estimated the number of seal on the rock at possibly 5000, this can only be an approximation, owing to the very rough nature of the ground.

having rowed out to the "Golden Fleece," which had by this time drifted about three miles to the North East of the place where we first left her, we sailed back to Carcass, arriving about midnight after being out about thirty six hours.

as before mentioned

SOME NOTES ON THE FUR SEAL ON THE POINTE ROCK, OFF EMBAYMENT

^

JASON.

The seals are present on the rock in the end of November, and it seems probable that breeding begins about that time or possibly a little before. All the pups seen by me, Dec. 12, were very young, although not apparently newly born.

The adults are very small, each bull has only two or three female females, and is obstinately defiant and threatening when with his young, whereas the females are easily scared away.

The adult bulls were seen to take to the water, but I cannot say if they were breeders or not, they were on the outside of the rockery and may possibly correspond to the "idle bulls" of the Northern herd, in the same way as the immature bulls seen may correspond to the one of the "Half an is"

When we were retiring to the boat from the breeding ground there was a large number of seal on the edge of the rock. I incline to believe that these were not immature bulls, but some of the breeding females; this point could have been decided by shooting a few of them, but I did not wish to do this, since the death of the mother at this season infallibly involves that of the pup, from starvation.

When in the water it seems to me to be impossible to distinguish between the adult female and the young male, not only on account of the bodily resemblance, but also on account of the very quiet movements of the animal.

The breeding ground is quite distinct from the hauling ground. It is not possible to say at present what proportion of each sex occurs on the latter, although in Prudler such places are almost exclusively haunted by males.

An Experimental License as suggested below, would decide this question, which is of paramount importance so far as the chronological working of the herd is concerned.

In April the herd was broken up, that is to say, that

all ages of both sexes are used up together, so that the confusio
lon between breeders and non-breeders is hopeless.

So far as is known no poaching has taken place since the
outbreak of war, presumably on account of the uncertainty of
movement of ships of the Royal Navy, and the consequent risk of
one of them appearing when a poacher was at work.

Protection.

It is absolutely certain that some form of protection
is necessary if the herd is not to be extirpated by poachers.

Under complete protection in Prichard the herd increased in
three years from 215,758 (1912) to 294,587 (1914). If the
Fairland seal can be compared with the Northern form there ^{is} ~~is~~
good hope of a comparatively rapid increase, given efficient pro-
tection.

A gun of small size mounted on the South end of Elephant
Island would completely cover this rookery, and I venture to sug-
gest that a weapon of three inch calibre would be adequate.

The military gun of this calibre has an effective range of
5000 yards which would most certainly prevent illegal access to
the Seal Rock.

It would probably be unnecessary to guard the rookery in
winter, since during the early part of that season the winds are
out of conditions - steady, and the uncertainty of the weather is
with a dangerous locality might very well ensure isolation for
the rest of the winter. In the past poachers have favoured
summer.

OTHER LOCALITIES.

In addition to the well known Ha Aua-Voluntear Rocks, St
Island and probably nearness Island, have reports of Fair Seal
from North Island near New Island, Cape Meredith, and possibly
the outer Passage Islands. In former times the Elephant Rock
had its herd, but there is no recent information about it.

SEALING LICENSE.

I beg to suggest that for the summer of 1910-11 an ex-
perimental licence might be granted to Mr Jason Hansen for the
Elephant Jason Rock rookery, with the reservations that every
endeavour be made to take seal from the non breeding herd,
the breeding ground is not disturbed at all, and that so far
possible no females be killed.

250 skins might be taken, and I propose a careful inspection of the entire catch in order to arrive at the proportion of the sexes and ages ^{so far as possible} of the seal taken under these conditions.

In the male the reproductive opening is in the middle of the belly, in the female, between the hind flippers so that a very short examination will decide the sex. In order to ensure sufficient care in skinning, the licensees might be informed that all skins which could not be identified as males would be counted as females.

Mr. J. Hansen is very ready to fall in with any scheme of this sort, and in my opinion could be relied upon to assist the Government in this matter. The skins could very well be inspected in Carcass Island, before being packed in cases for export.

One killing of this sort would provide most valuable data for a start.

In Pribilof the virgin females come to land just before the breeding of the herd, on the assumption that they do the same date, the period of the license might be from December 1 to January 15 inclusive, since the herd were broken up between December and April.

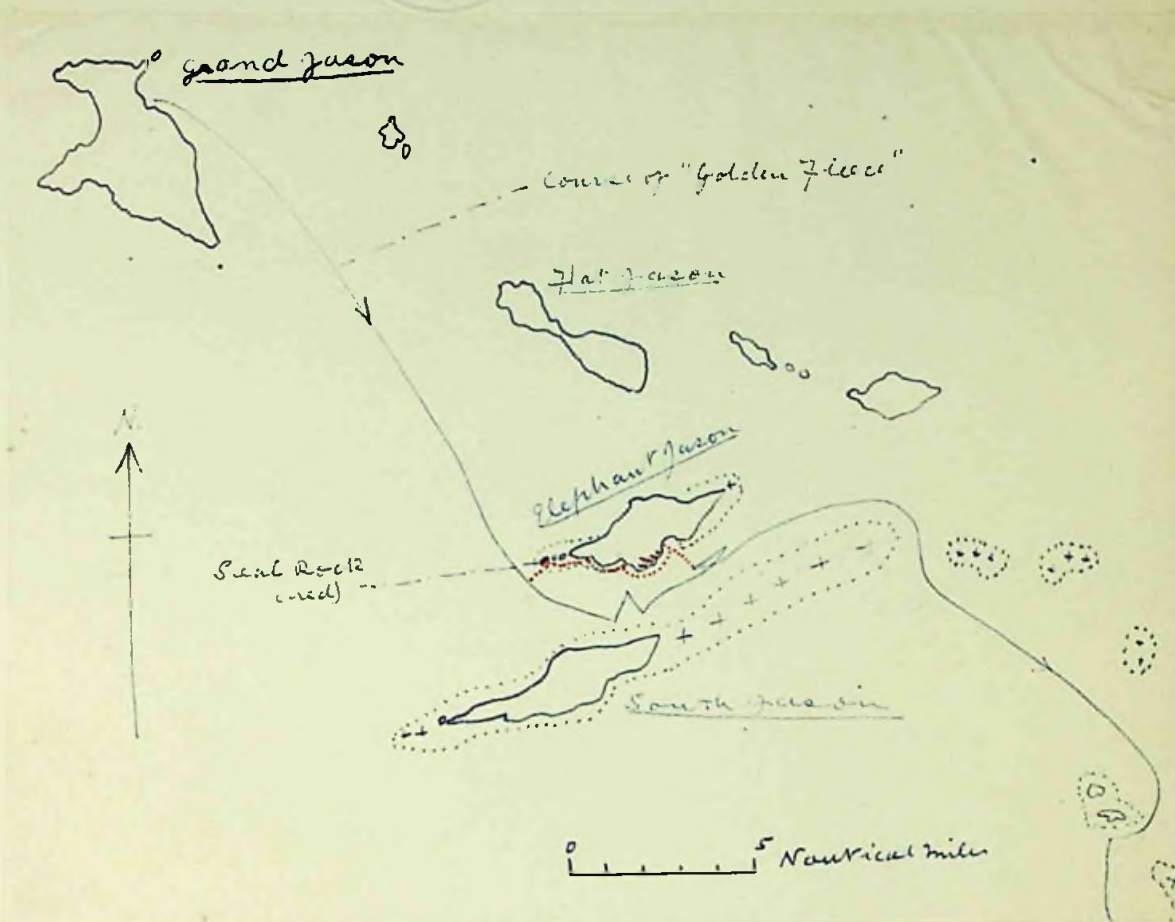
The poachers of past years took seal from the rock in the height of the breeding season, so that the continued presence of the animals on the rock indicated that they have not been frightened away by killing at this time of the year.

FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS.

Since there is no scientific information on the natural history and habits of the Southern Fur Seal, I suggest that a thorough investigation of the species is absolutely necessary before sound and final conclusions can be reached as to the best and most profitable way of dealing with the herd in the Farland Islands. By the production and publication of their report it is apparent that the Bureau of Fisheries of the United States of America were of the same opinion with regard to the Fur Seal of the Pribilof Islands.

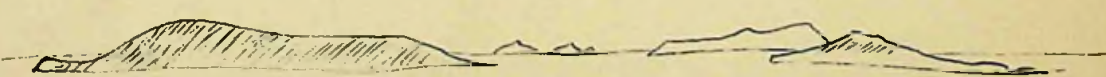
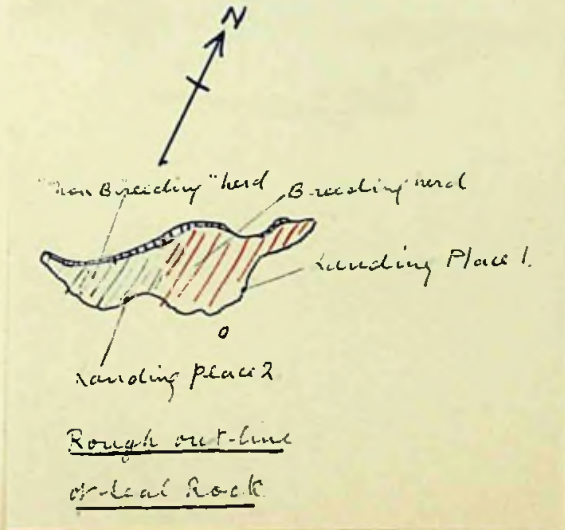
SUMMARY.

1. Seal are present in this pool during the greater part of the year.
2. Breeding is in full progress in the middle of December, 5000 seal were estimated as present on December 12.
3. Each bull has a very small harem, apparently two or three, and is most ferocious in defence of it.
4. The breeding ground is distinct from the hauling ground of what is probably the non-breeding herd.
5. It is not possible to differentiate between adult females and immature seals in the water.
6. Some form of protection is essential. A small gun or Elephant Jason is suggested, to be manned in winter only.
7. An ~~experimental~~ licence for the summer of 1920-21 is suggested, from December 1 to January 15, to be followed by an inspection of the skins to determine the proportions of the sexes, and if possible the ages of the animals killed.
8. The necessity for further information in order to supply the basis for future action is emphasised.



Sketch map of journey of 12-12-19.

Seal Rock marked in red.
 Course of dinghy runs:
 Former rookery on Elephant Jason Shes



Steeple Jason
 South Jason
 Grand Jason
 Elephant Jason

Sketches of the Jasons, except Flat Jason, from S.E.
distances: 15 to 40 miles.

NAT-SEA-1215-01



3. East end of Seal Rock.

Part of breeding herd.

There are about 40 seal in the photograph.

The Bull in the centre is roaring at the photographer.

NAT-SEA-1215-02



4. West end of Seal Rock

Part of miscellaneous and probably non-breeding herd.

About 30 seal may be counted.

NAT-SEA-1#15-03



1. Strait between Elephant and
South Jasons.
Seal approaching boat and
leaping from water.

NAT-SEA-1#15-04



2. Strait as in "1."
Seal leaping and swimming
The tide rips show clearly.
"a Golden Fleece."

On the Protection of Fur Seal in the Falkland Islands.

From the point of view of protection perhaps the two most important features of the Falkland Island seal herd are these:-a.the seal are found on small islands and rocks in remote parts of the Colony,b.the different haunts are widely separated.

Two methods might be employed in the work of protection in close conjunction with one another,the use of land guards or watchers,and that of some form of armed patrol vessel.

It appears certain that whatever might be done in the way of land watchers for the places where they could be used some kind of armed steamer would be absolutely necessary in order to protect the whole herd in these islands. By paying frequent visits to the different rookeries at irregular intervals and by its ability to overtake and arrest any poaching vessel a patrol steamer would go far to prevent outside interference with the seal herd,if indeed it did not secure complete safety for it in Territorial Waters.

It is only if the risk of losing their vessel becomes too great to be taken that poachers will be unwilling to come to the Falkland Islands so long as there are sufficient seal to pay them for their trouble.

One or two watchers ,even though armed,would clearly be of no use against ten or fifteen armed and reckless men, and there is no reason to suppose that the poachers which are most likely to appear,those from Punta Arenas,are not men of this description.

Since it is possible that the poaching might be done from steamers the patrol vessel would require to be capable of developing speed greater than that of the average small merchantman,even if she were seldom called upon to use it.

There are known at present four principal rookeries of Fur Seal in the Falkland Islands:-Elephant Jason Roc',Bird Island,Benuchene Island and the Volunteer Rocks.

If a guard were established on Elephant Jason as suggested in the report on my recent visit to that place,it would be necessary to devise some means by which the

patrol vessel might be summoned on the appearance of a suspicious craft.

This might be done by signal from Elephant Jason to a post on Hope Point or Carcass Island. Whichever might be selected would have to be in telephonic communication with Fox Bay, where the Local Wireless Station is situated. In either case a length of telephone/line would be required; this might connect with the line which already runs to Hill Cove.

There is no safe anchorage in the whole of the Jason Island but there is a good ^{small} harbour at Carcass Island, with a clear entrance; and Hope Harbour beside West Point Island appears to afford complete protection to any vessel lying in it.

I suggest that a guard, if established on Elephant Jason might be provided with a boat ^{fitted with air tanks} for use in case of emergency,

Some sort of land guard might be found to be necessary on Bird Island, which is reported to have been raided in the past, or perhaps on the mainland opposite it. If the latter were decided upon it should be remembered that the island is 410 feet high, and might therefore conceal a marauder lying on the South side of it. The nearest harbour to Bird Island is Port Stephens where there is complete protection, although the entrance is somewhat narrow.

Beauchene Island has no harbour whatever, and appears to be almost unknown.

The Volunteer Rocks are visible from the lighthouse on Cape Pembroke, which is connected with Stanley by telephone.

It may be added that Fishery and Hydrographical investigations might be undertaken by the patrol vessel in addition to the work of guarding the seal, if it were provided with the requisite apparatus.

ON THE SEA LION IN THE FALKLAND ISLANDS.

The Sea Lion appears to be abundant in all localities where there is ground suitable for it, that is to say where there are tussock islands, and these occur all round the coasts.

On the occasion of my visit to one of these islands with His Excellency the Administrator on November 12. I was able to come close to some of these animals.

The island in question, Kidney Island, is about three-quarters of a mile long and one quarter broad, and so far as my observations went the sea lions at that time occupied about one third of its area. The animals seen were almost all large males, which I estimate are about ten feet long, there may have been thirty ^{seen} if these, or possibly more. It seems likely that they were waiting the arrival of the females, since some of these were identified for certain, and if they had been present the males would almost certainly have been very much more difficult to approach, on account of the ferocity which they will exhibit at such times. Later on, on December 12 I saw a sea lion ~~and~~ ^{with} a female, the male was very savage, making threatening sounds when I was quite fifty yards distant.

On one small tussock island in Carcass Harbour it was usually possible to find a lot of ~~old~~ ^{old} sea lions of various ~~ages~~ ^{ages}, most of them being immature and probably males.

I have on a few occasions met with complaints that these animals destroy the tussock, and it is a universally accepted notion that no horse will ever go near a place where a sea lion has been.

Mr. Jason Hansen at one time made a trial of trying out some of the sea lions for oil, and found that the most profitable were the immature animals, which are fat and easily handled.

Having regard to the numbers of these animals and the fact that in the absence of any natural enemy they are on the increase it may be suggested that they are a field for industrial development. Such an industry might be run on the lines

W.H.S.

of the Sea Elephant industry, or on some other plan which would ensure a constant and undiminished supply of the animals and thus maintain the industry at its highest productivity.

It is conceivable that it might be found that there is an excess of males, since each male has only one or two females, but further investigation is required on this point before any definite statement can be made. In another member of the same Family, the Northern Fur Seal the capacity of the bull for service is at least eight females in the season. But it is not safe to form any definite conclusion as to the habits of one species of animal by reference to those of another, no matter how closely the two may be related.

During my recent stay on Carcass Island, Mr. J. Hansen enquired of me whether there was any likelihood of the Governor granting him an experimental license for one year in order that he might find out whether the working of these animals was profitable. He was of the opinion that the royalty payable on the skins of these sea lions was so great compared with their market value that it might easily swallow the profits on work and under-taking. If the one year's experiment were successful he saw clearly that the subject of royalty, either on the skin or on the oil would have to come up for consideration.

Mr. Hansen asked to kill one thousand sea lions and to work from June to October inclusive.

In a previous experiment he lost \$500 on 200 sea lions, but considers that the experience acquired then might enable him to work at a profit now, but not being certain of this in the absence of definite experience he did not wish to pay any royalty until he saw the result of his experimental working, that is, he wished to have this license free of all royalty for one year alone.

J.H.