



## DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR INFORMATION SERVICE

UNITED STATES FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

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### MARCOONED MUSK OX BULLS DISDAIN RESCUE

The musk ox herd on Nunivak Island in the Bering Sea now numbers at least 143 animals, the 1957 survey of Fish and Wildlife Service, Department of the Interior, shows. This includes two musk ox which have been stranded on a 10-acre islet since the ice breakup last spring.

These two bulls, with typical musk ox perversity, have resisted all attempts to cajole, entice, herd or shoo them into the water to make the quarter-mile swim to Nunivak. The two probably will "sit it out" until the fall freeze-up.

A waterhole has been dug on the island and there is a supply of food which should carry the animals over the summer and brief autumn. Several years ago a lone musk ox survived on Triangle Island after being stranded by the spring thaw so there is good reason to believe this pair will survive too.

The survey this year shows a calf crop of 25, just one less than the record crop of last year. This number, added to the 126 found in the 1956 survey, would bring the possible herd total up to 151 if there had been no mortality, which is quite unlikely in that it is entirely possible that some of the herd were caught on ice floes in the spring breakup and perished in the icy waters. However, some of the eight unaccounted for may be alive for it would be quite easy to miss a living member on an area as big as the million-acre Nunivak range.

Thirty-one musk ox were planted on Nunivak in 1935 and 1936. They were part of the 34 captured in Greenland in 1930 and transported to Alaska via Norway, New York and Seattle. Because of the unpredictable nature of the animal, the musk ox herd was moved from Alaska to the almost uninhabitable Nunivak Island where they share their bleak habitat with a reindeer herd estimated at 7,000.

The musk ox once roamed the Alaska Arctic wastes by the thousands, but by 1867, it had been erased from the Alaskan scene although there are a few hundred still thriving on Canada's sub-Arctic plains.

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