

*Oh, deer...
and me without a camera.*



Sometime in the late 1700's, white-tailed deer were introduced to the territory as a potential game animal by Danish colonists. The relatively small deer appear to have been brought to the U.S. Virgin Islands from the southern part of the United States. Unlike deer on the U.S. mainland, the deer in the Virgin Islands breed and have babies year-round, and their only predators on the island are potential wild dogs and cars. The first deer came to St. Croix and after they became established on the island, some were rounded up and brought to St. Thomas by boat.

The Division of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) was tasked to keep an eye on the deer population in the islands. At times they would transport several deer between the islands to maintain a balance. The population on St. Croix usually was higher and they would ship as many as eight at a time.

Why eight? That is how many seats there were on the Goose. That is right, they traveled like the rest of us. A DFW agent would arrive early morning with a van of deer. The deer were sedated and were placed in a seat and buckled in. The DFW agent sat in the right seat in the cockpit, and they would land in a more secluded location in St. Thomas, and he would swim them to shore.

I remember it was done on more than one occasion because I assisted with the boarding and placement of the deer. I have always wished I had a camera... the photo would have been iconic. No camera but I will never forget looking back from the forward cabin at the deer sitting on their white tail, strapped in, fore legs in the air, heads bobbing and ready for their 20-minute flight to STT.

Just another day at Antilles.

Tom Anusewicz

