One Whale of a Move:

UPS Transports the Largest Marine Mammal Collection on the East Coast of the U.S.

**CHALLENGE**
Coordinate and execute the transportation of roughly 75,000 fragile and unique animal specimens from Boston, MA to Athens, GA in no more than a week and a half.

**SOLUTION**
UPS employs its logistics and transportation expertise, emphasizing its ability to ship anything, anywhere, at any time.

**RESULT**
UPS successfully delivers the one-of-a-kind animal collection, without issues or delays, to its new home in Athens, GA.

UPA PORTFOLIO HIGHLIGHTS
UPS Express Critical®
When the University of Georgia’s Museum of Natural History needed roughly 75,000 animal specimens, including huge whale skulls, moved from Northeastern University in Boston, MA to Athens, GA within 11 days, the project at hand seemed daunting.

Moving fragile and ancient specimens more than 1,000 miles, let alone one of the largest marine mammal collections in existence, is no small feat. The move needed to take place in less than two weeks from planning and loading to relocating and unloading. Nevertheless, since UPS thrives on logistical tasks like this, when the museum reached out to UPS, the team was up for the challenge.

“When we started having conversations with Northeastern University, we quickly realized the immensity of the collection and we knew we needed to work with a logistics and transportation partner to get the job done,” said Bud Freeman, Director, Georgia Museum of Natural History at the University of Georgia. “Adding to the challenge, the collection itself is highly valuable and fragile—the specimens cannot be left out in the sun—and since UPS is our official carrier for the University of Georgia, we knew the team would be a perfect fit.”

Setting the Move in Motion

UPS worked closely with the museum to coordinate the move and developed a plan that involved UPS Express Critical®, a division of UPS that provides customized, tailored solutions for customers that require specialized handling, unique transportation requirements and/or high security for one-of-a-kind moves.

“The shipments for the University of Georgia’s Museum of Natural History were broken up into two separate phases, each requiring special handling,” said Randy Samson, Business Development Manager for UPS Express Critical. “The collection is very similar to an original work of art or something of that nature. It’s irreplaceable.”

For the first phase of the move, UPS and the museum had to overcome several challenges in order to successfully prepare and transport the collection. The biggest concern was physically getting all of the specimens, which were housed at an old artillery bunker from World War II on a remote island off of the coast of Boston Harbor, onto the trucks which would take them to their new home. “Initially, we planned to transport the collection on a tractor trailer, but since there was no lift gate or loading dock at the facility, we had to come up with another plan,” said Samson. “Rather than using a tractor trailer, we used multiple smaller vehicles to get the job done.”

“When making a move like this happen, we want to be sure that the materials are loaded with care and transported safely,” said Freeman. “UPS brought to the table the ability to bring in trucks with lift gates which were critical in loading the 500-plus pound skulls up onto the back of the truck. We’re not transportation experts. We’re biologists loading our precious specimens, and we want to be sure they arrive quickly and safely.”

Additional challenges that needed to be overcome involved time and space. “Time was ticking, and if the museum didn’t move quickly enough, the collection would no longer be available for their use,” said Cassie Dyer, Director of Enterprise Accounts for Government Sales at UPS. “There was a high likelihood the collection would have been given to another university and we weren’t going to let that happen.”

As for space, the trucks needed to store and transport three refrigerated freezer systems, multiple whale skulls and ribs that measured 14 to 17 feet long, a seven-foot long whale jaw, and thousands of marine and terrestrial animals including elephants, Humpback whales, the largest collection of Minke whales in existence, hippopotamuses, giraffes, birds, and fishes, among many others. The UPS Express Critical team consulted and worked hand-in-hand with the museum staff to make sure everything was packed and stored in the proper fashion, ensuring that all of the fragile and one-of-a-kind pieces made their way to Athens, GA safely and intact.

The second phase of the move required transporting the remaining 30,000 to 40,000 marine specimens in liquid-filled containers. The Smithsonian Institution also played a role in the second phase of the move. They donated 90 skin cases for the preservation of the specimens. UPS scheduled a pickup of these cases around the same time as the move of the marine specimens.

Homecoming

From the time the University of Georgia’s Museum of Natural History began communication with UPS to the day phase one of the move was complete, roughly a week and a half had passed. With the moves, the museum now houses the sixth largest collection of marine mammals in the U.S. and 11th largest in the world.

“I’m breathing a lot easier now that these very heavy and fragile Humpback and Fin whale skulls are sitting safely in the museum,” said Freeman. “Working with UPS was the best decision we could have made. Moving this delicate and large of a collection speaks to the company’s capacity to handle any kind of situation that arises when you need to move something fast and of a critical nature.”

Ultimately, the UPS team turned a whale of a challenge into a logistics success.