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Annual Report
Mammals 87-88

Report ^{on the} ~~upon the operations of the~~
^{in the U.S. National Museum,}
Department of Mammals ~~for the fiscal~~
~~year ending June 30, 1888.~~

By Frederick W. True,
Curator of the Department.

In my last report I stated that the chief features of the years work were the rearrangement of almost the entire exhibition series in new and specially-adapted cases, and the replacement of a portion of the defective material in the study series by the purchase of fresh specimens. During the past year the work has progressed along the same lines, but some special tasks were also undertaken, the principal of which was

The preparation of a large series of specimens for exhibition in the Ohio Valley Centennial Exposition in Cincinnati.

The idea of representing the more important mammals of North America by groups of specimens accompanied by accessories indicative of the habits and natural surroundings of the species, which had been for some time under consideration, was carried into execution by Mr. Hornaday, Chief Taxidermist.

Five groups have been placed in the exhibition hall, one of which, a group of Bisons, is one of the largest and most carefully executed works of its kind to be found in any museum.

More valuable material has been acquired by purchase and exchange and

less by donations than in previous years.

Some interesting specimens were received from two collectors sent out by the Smithsonian Institution. With one or two exceptions very little material has been received from persons in the various branches of the Government service.

No descriptions of new species of North American mammals have been published during the year, though announcements of the discovery of several have been made to some of the scientific societies.

Notes on important accessions.

North America. Selections were made from several collections of small mammals made by Mr. F. N. Stephens in the San Francisco Mts, Arizona, and the San Bernardino

Mts, California. These included specimens of Spermophilus tetricaudus, Perodromys deserti, Thomomys talpoides perballidus and other species of rodents not previously well-represented in the collection. Two specimens of an undescribed variety of Haplodon major from Pt. Reyes, California, were purchased from Mr. C. K. Worthen. A fine skin of
 X an unusually large male moose was obtained from Mr. A. B. Douglas of Eustis, Maine.

It is intended that this specimen shall form the chief figure in a group. Dr. J. C. Merrill, U. S. N. forwarded from Fort Klammath, Oregon, a considerable collection of small mammals, in addition to those sent last year. During his last tour through the western territories, Mr. Hornaday obtained among other specimens a very fine pair

5.

of wapiti antlers in the "clock". Not less interesting and valuable were two specimens of the striped Dolphin Lagenorhynchus acutus, which were presented by the U. S. Fish Commission. They were obtained by the officers of the Commission's schooner Grampus south of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. A fine Mountain Goat skin was purchased from Mr. E. C. Babcock.

Central America. The only important collection from this region was the considerable one made by Mr. Charles W. Townsend X in the vicinity of the Segovia river, Honduras. This included a valuable series of specimens of an undescribed deer, which has simple antlers like the species of the subgenus Coassus, but which, nevertheless, appears to belong to the subgenus Cariacus. Prof. Alfred

Duges presented a specimen of the rare meadow mouse Hovicola quasiater from the valley of Mexico.

Old World The most important exotic mammals obtained during the past year were those received from Prof. H. A. Ward in exchange for skins of North American species. The collection included several lemars, cats, civets, squirrels and kangaroos, all of which were of species new to the museum series. The Zoological Society of Philadelphia, through Mr. S. E. Brown, presented a fine male Horned Antelope Tragelaphus scriptus, an Indian squirrel Sciurus bicolor and a Moor Monkey Simiopsithecus maurus. Mr. Valdemar Knud-

son presented two additional specimens of the bat found in the Sandwich Islands. This

is a species of Atalapha, which is apparently distinct from those hitherto described and I have chosen for it the name of Atalapha serota. Mr. F. N. Lucas presented a skull of Burchell's Zebra. A skull and skeleton of the ziphoid whale, known as Ziphius grebnitzkii, were received from Mr. N. Grebnitzky, who obtained them from Bering Island.

Routine Work

In my last report I stated that new cases for almost the entire exhibition series were received at the end of the fiscal year. The month of July, 1887 was spent in planning the interior fittings for these cases and in rearranging the collection. The improvement in the appearance of the collection resulting from this work has been much

commented upon by persons visiting the museum.

The new wings added to the large wall-cases were fitted with shelves and bases, and the one intended for the seals was filled with specimens. The east wing, intended for the large ruminants, has not been arranged. Before the plans had been finished, the majority of the specimens were in requisition for display in the Cincinnati Exposition, and no permanent installment could be made.

The case of the Humpback Whale, which had previously rested upon iron standards at the south end of the exhibition hall, was suspended from the roof. By this change a considerable floor-space was made available for other purposes.

By far the most important additions to the exhibition series were the groups already alluded to. Five of the works representing the bison, prairie wolf or coyote, opossum, prong-horn antelope, and prairie dog, have been placed in the hall. The bison-group occupies a case about 17 feet long, $12\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide and 9 feet high. All the groups were designed by Mr. W. J. Hornaday and were executed by himself assisted by Messrs G. Palmer, A. H. Forney and Wm Palmer. Great pains were taken to make the groups true to nature, and in the case of the bison, coyote and antelope, the turf, bushes and other accessories were brought from Montana with the specimens themselves. The work has been very carefully done, special attention

being given to details. Several new groups are in preparation.

In addition to these five groups, which together include 27 specimens, the taxidermists have mounted about thirty other mammals. A few of these were still without stands at the end of the year or could not be completely finished for the lack of materials, and the remainder were sent to the Cincinnati Exposition. The usual list will therefore, be held over for next year's report, when the work done for the Cincinnati Exposition will be reported upon in full.

Work upon the study series - In addition to the regular routine-work connected with the identification and cataloguing of new specimens, correspondence, the preparation

of labels, &c, several special tasks were undertaken. The entire collection of skulls was furnished with uniform labels and the skins of the monkeys and carnivorans also received fresh labels, it having been noticed in the latter case that many of the old labels were becoming illegible. It should be remarked here that the original labels received with the specimens are never removed unless, as sometimes happens, they are of absurdly large size.

A division was made of the skins, amounting to over 300, which had accumulated in the taxidermists tanks, some being assigned to the exhibition series and others to the study series. A considerable number of large skins, belonging to the latter series, were received from the taxidermists

during the year, and were temporarily stored in the lower part of some of the exhibition cases.

The alcoholic collection has been temporarily placed on shelves in the south entrance of the museum. The jars have been repeatedly examined and the collection is in a fair state of preservation.

The boxes containing the skins of ruminants and other large mammals are stored in the south entrance, and are practically inaccessible for want of space.

A new card catalogue of the exhibition series has been formed by pasting copies of the printed labels on standard cards.

The other card catalogues are in the same condition as when last reported upon, except that the new accessions have been

entered upon them.

A series of antlers of North American deer was prepared for and sent to the Minneapolis Exposition.

Zoological Investigations

A general bibliography of works upon the Mammalia, commenced some time ago, now comprises about 15,000 titles. All the titles cited in the Zoological Record, the first and second parts of Carus and Engelmann's Bibliotheca, the Zoologische Anzeiger and Friedländer's catalogues are included, as well as references to the brief but often valuable notes to be found in the American Sportsman. This is, of course, only a beginning, but I have already found the catalogue of service in connection with the

work of the Department.

As a foundation for the work of representing graphically the geographical distribution of our North American mammals, copies have been made of all the available faunal lists about 67 in number, which have appeared from time to time in various works on the Nearctic fauna.

The Curator obtained some additional information regarding the type specimens of different species of dolphins during a short journey in Europe in the early part of the year, and has added to his review of the family a synopsis and material for figures of all the species. The paper has not, however, yet been published. He also prepared descriptions of two new rodents from

Padre Island, Texas, and of the Sandwich Island bat, some notes on Vesperugo hesperus (Allen) and a review of the changes in the catalogue of North American mammals in the last ten years. None of these papers have been published during the year.

Present state of the Collection.

The following figures show the number of specimens in the different series on June 30, 1887 and June 30, 1888, respectively.

June 30, 1887 June 30, 1888.

Number of specimens in the ex-

hibition series of skins.

752

696

Number of specimens in the

duplicate and study series of skins. 4088

4375-

Number of specimens in the alcoholic series. 2971

3049

Total

7811

8120

It will be noticed that the exhibition series is smaller than at the close of the previous year. This is due to the fact that when the new exhibition-cases were received a large number of old mounted skins, which were in a more or less dilapidated condition, were withdrawn from exhibition and placed among the duplicates. This replacement of defective specimens by good ones must go on gradually for several years, until the collection is entirely renovated. The number of specimens actually added during the year was thirty-two.

Among the accessions were about sixty species and sub-species not previously represented in the collection.

The number of skins and specimens in alcohol added and distributed during

The year was as follows:

Number of specimens added 247.

" " " distributed 69.

Four specimens only were received on deposit.

The first entry for the year in the catalogue of skins and alcoholics was no. 15900, the last on June 27, 1888, was no. 16236.

The present condition of the collection as regards preservation, is on the whole, satisfactory. The study-series of skins, however, is still in cases which are not dust proof. To devise effective and manageable appliances is a matter of considerable difficulty, owing to the great disparity in size among the skins and the cramped condition of the laboratory. Several plans

are under consideration, however, and the Curator hopes to be in a position to recommend the adoption of some one of them in the immediate future.

The skins of large mammals, which have accumulated during the past twenty five years being at present, as already stated, stored in large boxes arranged in tiers in the South entrance of the museum building are almost inaccessible for study.

Better provisions for them and for the large skins recently received from the taxidermists are much to be desired.

A partial reconstruction of the storage cases now in the laboratory and the addition of one new case would be all that is necessary for the present.

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Publications

Nelson, E. W. ^{2nd} and True F. W.

Mammals of Northern Alaska.

{ Report upon Natural History Collec-
tions made in Alaska. 1877-1881.

Pp. 227-293. 1887

10-18.
Revised
L. G.

Curator's Rep. file

copy — orig.
in file

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U. S. National Museum, 1888,

~~1888.~~

By Frederick W. True, Curator.

~~1888-202-2~~----

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Nelson have published a report upon the Mammals obtained by Mr Nelson in Alaska, 1877-1881.

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