



Drawn from Nature by J.W. Audubon.

On Stone by W.E. Hitchcock

Columbian Black-Tailed Deer

Lith. Printed & Col'd by J.T. Bowen, Philad^a

CERVUS RICHARDSONII.—AUD. AND BACH.

COLUMBIAN BLACK-TAILED DEER.

PLATE CVI.—MALES.

C. Supra subrufus, infra albus, auriculis mediocribus, angustioribus quam in C. macrotide, corpore minore, ungulis angustioribus et acutioribus quam in uto, macula albida in natibus nulla, cornibus teretibus bis bifurcatis.

CHARACTERS.

Ears, moderate, narrower than in C. Macrotis ; size, less than C. Macrotis ; hoofs, narrower and sharper ; no light patch on the buttocks ; colour, reddish-brown above, white beneath ; horns, cylindrical, twice bifurcated.

SYNONYMES.

CERVUS MACROTIS. Rich (non SAY) Black-tailed Deer, Fauna Boreali Americana, p. 254, pl. 20.

CALIFORNIA DEER, of gold diggers.

DESCRIPTION.

Male.—In size this animal a little exceeds the Virginian Deer, but it is less than the Mule Deer (*C. Macrotis*) ; in form it is shorter and stouter than *C. Virginianus*.

There is a tuft of long pendulous hairs hanging down from the umbilicus backward to between the thighs. The horns are nearly cylindrical, and are twice forked ; the first bifurcation being ten inches from the base—about five to six inches longer to that fork than in *C. Macrotis*, as described by SAY. There is a knob, in the specimen from which we describe, on one horn, about four inches from the base ; the horn continues in a single branch for about ten inches, where it divides into two branches, each of which has two points ; and the antlers may be said to bear some resemblance to those of the Red Deer of Europe, much greater than do those of the Virginian Deer or Elk.

Ears, of moderate size ; head, proportionately a little shorter than the head of the Virginian Deer and nose less pointed ; hoofs, narrow and

sharp, and longer and more pointed than those of the Mule Deer (*C. Macrotis*), which are round and flattened.

The lachrymal openings are large, and situated close beneath the eye; tail, rather short, stouter and more bushy than that of *C. Macrotis*.

COLOUR.

A brown mark originating between the nostrils is continued behind their naked margins, downwards, towards the lower jaw, uniting with a dark patch situated behind the chin; chin and throat, white; forehead, dark-brown; neck, back, sides, and hips, brownish-gray; hairs clothing those parts, brown from their roots to near their tips, where they exhibit a pale yellowish-brown ring surmounted by a black tip; on the back part of the neck there is a dark line down the middle of the back, becoming lighter as it recedes from the neck.

The chest is blackish-brown, running around the shoulder somewhat like the mark of a collar; a dark line extends from under the chest to the centre of the belly; the anterior of the belly is fawn-coloured, the posterior part white, as are likewise the insides of the thighs; the tail, at its junction with the back, is dark brown, and this colour increases in depth to the tip, which is black; the under side of the tail is clothed with long white hairs; the legs are mixed yellowish-brown and black anteriorly, and pale brownish-white posteriorly.

DIMENSIONS.

	Feet.	Inches
Length from tip of nose to brow (between the horns),	1	
“ “ “ to root of tail, - - -	5	4
“ of tail (vertebræ), - - -		6
“ “ (to end of hair), - - -		9
Height at shoulder, - - -	2	6
Width of horns between superior prongs, - - -	1	8
“ “ “ posterior pair of points, -	1	3

HABITS.

This beautiful Deer is found variously dispersed over the western portions of the North American continent, where it was first noticed by LEWIS and CLARK, near the mouth of the Columbia River; but not until the discovery of the golden treasures of California did it become generally known to white men. In that country, along the hill sides and in the

woody dells and "gulches," the hardy miners have killed hundreds, nay thousands, of Black-tailed Deer; and it is from the accounts they have given that it is now known to replace, near the great Sierra Nevada, the common or Virginian Deer which is found east of the Rocky Mountains; all the hunters who have visited California, and whom we have seen, tell us that every Deer they shot there was the Black-tailed species.

J. W. AUDUBON killed a good many of these Deer, and describes them as tender and of good flavour; and during the time his party encamped on the Tuolumne River, and in the "dry diggings" near Stockton, when he kept two of his men busy shooting for the support of the others, they generally had one or two Deer brought into camp every day. The mode of hunting them was more similar to what is called Deer-stalking in Scotland than to the methods used for killing Deer in the eastern part of the Union. Sometimes the hunters (who had no dogs) would start before day, and, gaining the hills, anxiously search for fresh tracks in the muddy soil (for it was then the rainy season, and the ground everywhere wet and soft), and, having found a trail, cautiously follow; always trying to keep the wind in such a direction as not to carry the scent to the animals. After discovering a fresh track, a search of a most tedious and toilsome nature awaited them, as the unsuspecting Deer might be very near, or miles off, they knew not which; at every hill-top they approached, they were obliged to lie down and crawl on the earth, pausing when they could command the view to the bottom of the valley which lay beyond the one they had just quitted; and after assuring themselves none were in sight, carefully following the zigzag trail, proceed to the bottom. Again another summit has been almost reached; now the hunters hope for a shot: eye and ear are strained to the utmost, and they move slowly forward; the ridge of the next hill breaks first upon their sight beyond a wide valley. The slope nearest them is still hidden from their view. On one side the mountains rise in steeper and more irregular shapes; pine-trees and oaks are thickly grown in the deepest and most grassy spot far below them. The track trends that way, and silently they proceed, looking around at almost every step, and yet uncertain where their game has wandered. Once the trail has been almost lost in the stony, broken ground they pass, but again they have it; now they approach and search in different directions the most likely places to find the Deer, but in vain; at last they gain the next summit: the object of their chase is at hand; suddenly they see him—a fine buck—he is yet on the declivity of the hill, and they cautiously observe his motions. Now they see some broken ground and rocky fragments scattering towards the left; they redouble their caution; locks are ready cocked; and, breathing rapidly, they gain the desired spot

One instant—the deadly rifle has sent its leaden messenger and the buck lies struggling in his gore.

Short work is made of the return to camp if no more Deer signs are about; and a straight cut may bring the hunters home in less than an hour, even should they have been two or three in following their prize.

Sometimes the Deer start up suddenly, quite near, and are shot down on the instant; occasionally, after a long pursuit, the crack of a rifle from an unknown hunter deprives the others of their chance; and—must we admit it—sometimes they miss; and not unfrequently they see no game at all.

Mr. J. G. BELL informed us that while he was digging gold in a sequestered and wild cañon, in company with a young man with whom he was associated in the business, they used to lie down to rest during the heat of the day, and occasionally he shot a Black-tailed Deer, which unsuspectingly came within shooting distance down the little brook that flowed in the bottom of the ravine. He also used to rise very early in the mornings occasionally, and seek for the animals in the manner of still-hunting, as practised in the United States. One morning he killed three in this manner, before his breakfast-time, and sold them, after reserving some of the best parts for himself and companion, for eighty dollars apiece! He frequently sold Deer subsequently, as well as hares and squirrels, birds, &c., which he shot at different times, for enormous prices. Many of the miners, indeed, turned their attention to killing Deer, elk, bear, antelopes, geese, ducks, and all sorts of game and wild fowl, by which they realized considerable sums from selling them at San Francisco and other places. We have heard of one person who, after a luckless search for gold, went to killing Deer and other game, and in the course of about eighteen months had made five thousand dollars by selling to the miners at the diggings.

The gait of this species is not so graceful as that of the Virginian Deer; it bounds rather more like the roebuck of Europe than any other of our Deer except the Long-tailed Deer, and is reported to be very swift. The season of its breeding is earlier than that of the common Deer, and it no doubt brings forth the same number of young at a time.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

This beautiful Deer was first met with by J. W. AUDUBON on the eastern spurs of the coast range of mountains after leaving Los Angeles and traversing a portion of the Tule valley in California. On entering the broad plain of the San Joaquin and river of the lakes, few Black-tailed Deer were met with, and the elk and antelope took their place. The

party again found them abundant when they reached the hills near the Sierra Nevada, on their way towards the Chinese diggings, about eighty miles southeast of Stockton.

They may be said to inhabit most of the hilly and undulating lands of California, and as far as we can judge probably extend on the western side of the grand ridge of the Rocky Mountains nearly to the Russian Possessions.

We have not heard that they are met with east of the bases of that portion of the Cordilleras which lies in the parallel of San Francisco, or north or south of that latitude, although they may exist in the valleys of the Colorado of the west in a northeast direction from the mouth of that river, which have as yet not been much explored.

GENERAL REMARKS.

According to our present information, there is only one specimen of this Deer in the collections of objects of natural history in Europe, and this is in the museum of the Zoological Society in London, where it was, when we saw it, (erroneously) labelled *C. Macrotis*.

At the Patent Office in Washington city there is a skin of a Deer (one of the specimens brought from the northwest coast of America by the Exploring Expedition), which has been named by Mr. PEALE *C. Lewisii*.

We have not positively ascertained whether it be distinct from our *C. Richardsonii*, but presume it will prove to be well separated from it, as well as from all our hitherto described Deer, and we shall endeavour to figure it, if a good species, and introduce it into our fauna under the name given it by Mr. PEALE.

We have detected an error in the description of the horns of *C. Macrotis* (see vol. ii. p. 206), where a portion of the description of those of *C. Richardsonii* seems to have been introduced by mistake.



Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1854. "Cervus richardsonii, Columbian Black-tailed Deer [Pl. CVI, males]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 3, 27–31. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322391>.

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