

# Field Museum News

Published Monthly by Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago

Vol. 4

MAY, 1933

No. 5

## GREAT GAUR OX OF ASIA SHOWN IN NEW GROUP

BY WILFRED H. OSGOOD  
Curator, Department of Zoology

An important addition to the habitat groups of Asiatic mammals in William V. Kelley Hall (Hall 17) is a group of the great bovine known as the gaur or seladang (also spelled sladang). This group makes the fourth in the Museum representing the principal wild oxen of present times, the others being the African or Cape buffalo, the Indian or water buffalo and the American bison. Although less generally known, the gaur is perhaps the finest of all, since it is the equal of any in size and strength, while its rich coloration and striking markings give it a high degree of distinction.

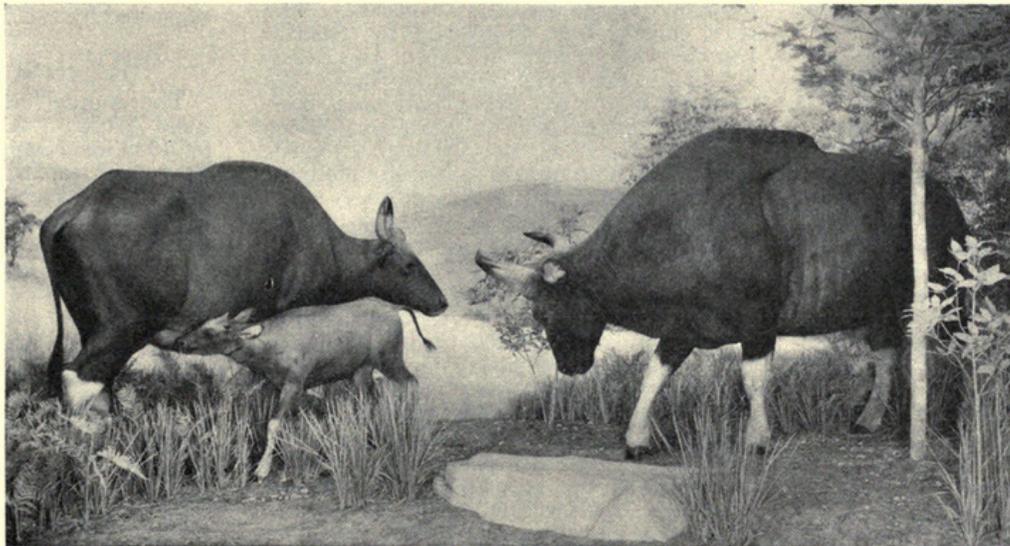
The gaur is mainly a forest animal and prefers hilly or mountainous country. Formerly it was to be found in practically all the wooded hills of India south of the Himalayas and thence it extended into Burma, Siam and Indo-China. Like most forest-dwellers, however, it is shy and wary, and in recent years it has retired before man until now it is found only in the more remote and less frequented parts of its original range. The establishment of large reserves has contributed to its preservation and, although it is reduced in numbers, it is probably in no immediate danger of extinction.

As an object of the chase, the gaur stands high in the regard of sportsmen. The magnificent head with its massive, polished horns furnishes a trophy of unusual quality and one which cannot be obtained easily. Opinions differ in regard to the dangers of hunting this animal. Some go so far as to consider it the most dangerous of all wild game, but the evidence is not convincing. Under sufficient provocation it will undoubtedly charge furiously and carry through with extreme vindictiveness. On the other hand, it is known to be exceedingly alert and inclined to flee precipitately at the slightest alarm. It feeds morning and evening about the edges of grassy openings and spends the day quietly in the forest depths. It requires very careful stalking with much attention to the wind, for it is very keen of scent, and its heavy body does not succumb readily to a bullet inaccurately placed. In thick cover, therefore, hunting it may well be difficult and hazardous.

In spite of its size and weight this ox has extraordinary speed and agility in traversing rough country, leaping over fallen timber and scaling rocky ascents with an apparent

ease which has excited much comment. So far as known it has never been domesticated, and attempts to rear captured young calves have always resulted in failure. Under exceptional circumstances it may form fairly large herds, but it is commonly found in small parties of five or six to ten or fifteen.

The specimens in the Museum's group are from three sources, having been carefully selected from the results of several expeditions. The large bull fell to the rifle of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt while a member of the William V. Kelley-Roosevelts Expedition to Eastern Asia for Field Museum.



Gaur Ox or Seladang

New group placed on exhibition in William V. Kelley Hall. These animals rank among the largest, strongest and handsomest members of the bovine family.

The cow was presented by Charles Rydell of San Francisco, and the young calf was especially collected and presented for the group by George F. Ryan and George G. Carey, Jr., of Baltimore.

The taxidermy is by Julius Friesser and Arthur G. Rueckert of the Museum staff. The background, representing a scene in southern Indo-China, is by Staff Artist Charles A. Corwin.

## Rare Flowers Received

A recent shipment of plants and woods received at the Museum from the plantation of the Companhia Ford Industrial do Brasil includes specimens of flowers seldom seen in botanical collections—those of the Brazil nut tree. While the fruits of this tree are readily enough obtained, since they fall when ripe, the flowers are inaccessible on account of the height of the trees, which often have their lowest branches sixty to seventy feet above the ground. It is said that the famous naturalists Humboldt and Bonpland, on their historic South American expedition which began in 1799, offered without success an ounce of gold for a specimen of these flowers. In general appearance the flowers resemble those of the cannon-ball tree exhibited in the Hall of Plant Life (Hall 29), but are much smaller.

## MIGRATION OF LIMESTONE TO TROPICAL REGIONS

BY HENRY W. NICHOLS  
Associate Curator of Geology

A strange consequence of changes in the world's climate since Paleozoic time is the slow migration of the limestones of temperate and arctic zones to the tropics. This phenomenon, pointed out years ago by Sir John Murray, results from a curious chain of circumstances. Although millions of tons of limestone are transported by natural forces to the tropics annually, this quantity

is so small in comparison with the entire body of limestone that a geological age must elapse before the change in distribution becomes apparent.

Limestone is slightly soluble in surface and circulating underground waters. This is the reason for the hardness of the water of streams and ponds in limestone regions, and for the existence of great caverns such as the Mammoth Cave of Kentucky. Much water loaded thus with dissolved limestone eventually finds its way to the sea where currents distribute it through the ocean. The dissolved limestone is then extracted from the water by corals, shellfish, and

other marine animals, which make their skeletons or shells of it. From accumulations of these skeletons and shells most limestones are formed. As these animals are more numerous and active in the warm air and water of the equatorial regions than in the cooler water of the temperate zones, the greater part of the dissolved limestone is thus withdrawn from the sea water in the tropics.

This redistribution of the limestone is due to the present cool climate of the temperate zones. In Paleozoic time when climates were more equable it did not occur. Limestones dissolved from the land were as likely to be deposited in one part of the sea as another.

The exhibits of Paleozoic fossils in Ernest R. Graham Hall (Hall 38) show large numbers of corals, crinoids, and other lime-absorbing forms which lived in the Chicago climatic zone about 400,000,000 years ago. In the zoological exhibits which illustrate present life, however, such forms occur only as specimens from the tropics and semi-tropics.

A fruit cluster of the Malayan betel palm, source of the betel nut habitually chewed by many peoples of the Oriental tropics, is on exhibition in the Hall of Plant Life.



Nichols, Henry W. 1933. "Migration of Limestone to Tropical Regions." *Field Museum news* 4(5), 1-1.

**View This Item Online:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/25716>

**Permalink:** <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/350802>

**Holding Institution**

Field Museum of Natural History Library

**Sponsored by**

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

**Copyright & Reuse**

Copyright Status: NOT\_IN\_COPYRIGHT

Rights Holder: Field Museum of Natural History

This document was created from content at the **Biodiversity Heritage Library**, the world's largest open access digital library for biodiversity literature and archives. Visit BHL at <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org>.