CANIS LATRANS.—SAY.

PRAIRIE WOLF,—BARKING WOLF.

PLATE LXXI.—MALE.

C. cano cinereus nigris et opace pulvo-cinnameo-variegatus ; lateribus pallidioribus ; fasciâ taise lâta brevinigrâ ; cauda rectâ fusiformi cineraceo-cinnameoque variegata apice nigra.

CHARACTERS.

Hair cinereous grey, varied with black above and dull fulvous cinnamon ; sides paler than the back, obsoletely fasciate, with black above the legs ; tail straight, bushy, fusiform, varied with grey and cinnamon, tip black.

SYNONYMES.

SMALL WOLVES, Dr Praly, Louisiana, vol. ii., p. 54.

PRAIRIE WOLF, Gass. Journal, p. 56.

PRAIRIE WOLF and BURROWING DOG, Lewis and Clark, vol. i., p. 102, 13, 203.
vol. iii., pp. 102, 136, 203.

" " Schoolcraft's Travels, 285.

CANIS LATRANS, Say, Long's Exped. i., p. 168.

" " Harlan, p. 33.

" " God., 1 vol., 26.

" " Richardson, F. B. Ar. 75.

LYCISCUS CAJOTTIS, Hamilton Smith, Nat. Lib., vol. iv., p. 164, p. 6.

DESCRIPTION.

The Barking or Prairie Wolf is intermediate in size, between the large American Wolf and the grey Fox (*V. virginianus*.) It is a more lively animal than the former, and possesses a cunning fox-like countenance. In seeing it on the prairies, and also in menageries, in a state of domestication, we have often been struck with its quick, restless manner, and with many traits of character that reminded us of sly reynard.

The nose is sharp and pointed ; nostrils moderately dilated and naked—the upper surface to the forehead covered with compact short hairs ; eyelids placed obliquely on the sides of the head. Eyes rather small—

On Stone by Wm. E. Hitchcock

Prairie Wolf

Drawn from Nature by J. W. Audubon

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

moustaches few, very rigid, extending to the eyes, four or five stiff hairs rising on the sides of the neck below the ears. Head rather broad; Ears, erect, broad at base, running to an obtuse point, clothed with compact soft fur in which but few of the longer hairs exist; body, tolerably stout; legs, of moderate length, shorter in proportion than those of the common Wolf; Tail, large and bushy, composed like the covering of the body of two kinds of hair, the inner soft and woolly, the outer longer and coarser and from two to three and a half inches in length. Soles of the feet naked, nails rather stout, shaped like those of the dog. The whole structure of the animal is indicative of speed, but from its compact shape and rather short legs we would be led to suppose that it was rather intended for a short race than a long heat.

COLOUR.

Nostrils, around the edges of the mouth, and moustaches, black; upper surface of nose, and around the eyes, reddish brown; upper lip, around the edges of the mouth, and throat, white; eye-lids, yellowish white; hairs on the forehead, at the roots reddish brown, then a line of yellowish white tipped with black, giving it a reddish grey appearance. Inner surface of the ears (which are thinly clothed with hair) white; outer surface, yellowish brown; the fore legs reddish brown, with a stripe of blackish extending from the fore shoulder in an irregular black line over the knee to near the paws. Outer surface of the hind legs, reddish brown, inner surface a little lighter.

On the back the soft under fur is dingy yellow; the longer hair from the roots to two-thirds of its length black, then a broad line of yellowish brown, broadly tipped with black. Neck, reddish brown; throat and all beneath, yellowish white, with bars under the throat and on the chest and belly of a reddish tinge. On the tail the softer hair is plumbeous, the longer hairs are like those on the back, except on the tip of the tail where they are black for nearly their whole length. The description here given is from a very fine specimen obtained at San Antonio in Texas. There is not however a uniformity of colour in these animals, although they vary less than the large wolves. The specimen which RICHARDSON described was obtained on the Saskatchewan. We examined it in the Zoological Museum of London: it differs in some shades of colours from ours—its ears are a little shorter, its nose less pointed, and the skull less in breadth—but it was evidently the same species, and could not even be regarded as a distinct variety. The many specimens we examined and compared, in various tints of colour differed considerably, some wanting the brown

tints, being nearly grey, while many had black markings on the shin and forelegs which were absent in others. In all descriptions of wolves, colour is a very uncertain guide in the designation of species.

DIMENSIONS.

	Ft.	Inches.
From point of nose to root of tail	2	10
Tail vertebræ,		11
Do. to end of hair,	1	3
Height of ear,		3
Breadth of do. at the base,		3
From heel to end of longest nail,		6
Point of nose to corner of eye,		3½
Breadth of skull,		4
Fore shoulder to end of longest nail,	1	1
Breadth across the forehead,		2½

HABITS.

We saw a good number of these small wolves on our trip up the Missouri river, as well as during our excursions through those portions of the country which we visited bordering on the Yellow Stone.

This species is well known throughout the western parts of the States of Arkansas and Missouri, and is a familiar acquaintance of the "voyageurs" on the upper Missouri and Mississippi rivers. It is also found on the Saskatchewan. It has much the appearance of the common grey Wolf in colour, but differs from it in size and manners.

The Prairie Wolf hunts in packs, but is also often seen prowling singly over the plains in search of food. During one of our morning rambles near Fort Union, we happened to start one of these wolves suddenly. It made off at a very swift pace and we fired at it without any effect, our guns being loaded with small shot at the time; after running about one hundred yards it suddenly stopped and shook itself violently, by which we perceived that it had been touched; in a few moments it again started and soon disappeared beyond a high range of hills, galloping along like a hare or an antelope.

The bark or howl of this wolf greatly resembles that of the dog, and on one occasion the party travelling with us were impressed by the idea that Indians were in our vicinity, as a great many of these wolves were about us and barked during the night like Indian dogs. We were all on the alert, and our guns were loaded with ball in readiness for an attack.

In Texas the Prairie Wolves are perhaps more abundant than the other species; they hunt in packs of six or eight, which are seen to most advantage in the evening, in pursuit of deer. It is amusing to see them cut across the curves made by the latter when trying to escape, the hindmost Wolves thus saving some distance, and finally striking in ahead of the poor deer and surrounding it, when a single Wolf would fail in the attempt to capture it. By its predatory and destructive habits, this Wolf is a great annoyance to the settlers in the new territories of the west. Travellers and hunters on the prairies, dislike it for killing the deer, which supply these wanderers with their best meals, and furnish them with part of their clothing, the buck-skin breeches, the most durable garment, for the woods or plains. The bark or call-note of this Wolf, although a wild sound to the inhabitant of any settled and cultivated part of the country, is sometimes welcomed, as it often announces the near approach of daylight; and if the wanderer, aroused from his slumbers by the howling of this animal, raises his blanket and turns his head toward the east, from his camping-ground underneath the branches of some broad spreading live-oak, he can see the red glow, perchance, that fringes the misty morning vapours, giving the promise of a clear and calm sunrise in the mild climate of Texas, even in the depth of winter. Should day-light thus be at hand, the true hunter is at once a-foot, short space of time does he require for the duties of the toilet, and soon he has made a fire, boiled his coffee, and broiled a bit of venison or wild turkey.

This Wolf feeds on birds, small and large quadrupeds, and when hard pressed by hunger, even upon carrion or carcasses of buffaloes, &c. It is easily tamed when caught young, and makes a tolerable companion, though not gifted with the good qualities of the dog. We had one once, which was kept in a friend's store in the west, and we discovered it to be something of a rat catcher. This individual was very desirous of being on friendly terms with all the dogs about the premises, especially with a large French poodle that belonged to our friend, but the poodle would not permit our half-savage barking Wolf to play with him, and generally returned its attempted caresses with an angry snap, which put all further friendly demonstrations out of the question. One day we missed our pet from his accustomed place near the back part of the ware-house, and while we were wondering what had become of him, were attracted by an unusual uproar in the street. In a moment we perceived the noise was occasioned by a whole pack of curs of high and low degree, which were in full cry, and in pursuit of our Prairie Wolf. The creature thus hard beset,

before we could interfere, had reached a point opposite a raised window, and to our surprise, made a sudden spring at it and jumped into the warehouse without touching the edges of the sills, in the most admirable manner, while his foes were completely baffled.

After this adventure the Wolf would no longer go out in the town and seemed to give up his wish to extend the circle of his acquaintance.

The Barking or Prairie Wolf digs its burrows upon the prairies on some slight elevation, to prevent them from being filled with water. These dens have several entrances, like those of the red fox. The young, from five to seven and occasionally more in number, are brought forth in March and April. They associate in greater numbers than the larger Wolves, hunt in packs, and are said by RICHARDSON to be fleetier than the common Wolf. A gentleman, an experienced hunter on the Saskatchewan, informed him that the only animal on the plains which he could not overtake when mounted on a good horse, was the prong-horned antelope, and that the Prairie Wolf was next in speed.

All our travellers have informed us, that on the report of a gun on the prairies, numbers of these Wolves start from the earth, and warily approach the hunter, under an expectation of obtaining the offal of the animal he has killed.

The skins of the Prairie Wolves are of some value, the fur being soft and warm ; they form a part of the Hudson Bay Company's exportations, to what extent we are not informed. RICHARDSON says they go under the name of cased-wolves skins, not split open like those of the large Wolf, but stripped off and inverted or cased, like the skin of a fox or rabbit.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

According to RICHARDSON, the northern range of this species is about the fifty-fifth degree of latitude. It is found abundantly on the plains of the western prairies and sparingly on the plains adjoining the woody shores of the Columbia river. It exists in California, and is found in Texas and on the eastern side of the mountains in New Mexico. We have traced it to within the tropics, but are not aware that it reaches as far south as Panama. The eastern branches of the Missouri river appear to be its farthest eastern range.

GENERAL REMARKS.

There has been but little difficulty in the nomenclature of this species. Hamilton Smith, we perceive, has given it a new name, from a specimen obtained in Mexico. The description of its habits, by LEWIS and CLARKE, is full and accurate and in accordance with our own observations.

Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1851. "Canis latrans, Prairie Wolf [Pl. LXXI, male]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 2, 150–155.

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