CERVUS VIRGINIANUS.—PENNANT.

COMMON AMERICAN DEER.

PLATE LXXXI.—FAWN.

PLATE CXXXVI.—MALE AND FEMALE.—Winter pelage.

C. cornibus mediocribus, ramosis, sub-complanatis, retrorsum valde inclinatis, dein antrorsum versis; ramo basali-interno retrorso; ramis plurimis posticis, retrorsum et sursum spectantibus, sinibus suborbitalibus plicam cutaneam formantibus; vellere aestate fulvo, hyeme canescente-fusco.

CHARACTERS.

Horns middle sized, tending to flatten, strongly bent back and then forwards; a basal antler on the internal side, pointing backwards; several snags on the posterior edge, turned to the rear, and upwards; suborbital sinus making a fold; colour, fulvous in summer, gray-brown in winter.

SYNONYMES.

- VIRGINIAN DEER. Penn. Syn., p. 51
 “ “ Penn. Quadrupeds. Vol. 1, p. 104.
 “ “ Shaw's General Zoology. Vol. 2, p. 284.
 AMERIKANISCHER HIRSCH. Kalm Reise. Vol. 2, p. 326. 3d. p. 482.
 VIRGINISCHER HIRSCH. Zimmerm. Geogr. Gesch. Vol. 2, p. 129.
 CERF DE LA LOUISIANE. Cuv. Regn. An., 1ère p. 256.
 CERVUS VIRGINIANUS. Gmel. Vol. 1, p. 179.
 DAMA AMERICANUS. Erxl. Syst., p. 312.
 C. VIRGINIANUS. Harlan. Fauna Am., p. 239.
 “ Godm. Am. Nat. Hist. Vol. 2. p. 306.
 C. MEXICANUS ET CLAVATUS. Hamilton Smith, p. 315. Griff. Cuv. Vol. 4. p. 127.
 Vol. 5, p. 315.
 C. VIRGINIANUS. Dekay's N. Y. Fauna, p. 113.

DESCRIPTION.

Muzzle sharp; head rather long; eyes large and lustrous; lachrymal pits covered by a fold of the skin. Tail moderately depressed. Legs

On Stone by W^m E. Hitchcock

Common American Deer.
Fawn

Drawn from Nature by J.W. Audubon

Lith. Printed & Col^d by J.T. Bowen Phil

slender. A glandular pouch surrounded by a thick tuft of rigid hairs inside of the hind legs.

COLOUR.

The Virginian Deer varies considerably in colour at different periods of the year. In the spring it is of a dusky reddish or fulvous colour above, extending over the whole head, back, upper surface of the tail and along the sides. In the autumn it is of a bluish or lead colour, and in winter the hairs on the upper surface are longer and more dense and of a brownish dark tint. Beneath the chin, throat, belly, inner surface of legs, and under side of tail, white. There is no perceptible difference in colour between the sexes.

The fawns are at first, bright reddish-brown, spotted with irregular longitudinal rows of white. These spots become less visible as the animal grows older, and in the course of about four months the hairs are replaced by others, and it assumes the colour of the old ones.

DIMENSIONS.

					Feet.	Inches.
Length from nose to root of tail,	-	-	-	-	5	4
“ of tail, (vertebræ),	-	-	-	-		6
“ including hairs,	-	-	-	-	1	1
“ Height of ear,	-	-	-	-		5½

HABITS.

Perhaps no species of wild animal inhabiting North-America, deserves to be regarded with more interest than the subject of our present article, the Common or Virginian Deer; its symmetrical form, graceful curving leap or bound, and its rushing speed, when, flying before its pursuers, it passes like a meteor by the startled traveller in the forest, exciting admiration, though he be ever so dull an observer.

The tender, juicy, savoury, and above all, digestible qualities of its flesh are well known; and venison is held in highest esteem from the camp of the backwoodman to the luxurious tables of the opulent, and, when not kept too long (a common error in our large cities by the way) a fat haunch with jelly and chafing dishes is almost as much relished, as a “hunter’s steak,” cooked in the open air on a frosty evening far away in the west. The skin is of the greatest service to the wild man, and also useful to the dweller in towns; dressed and smoked by the squaw, until soft and pliable,

it will not shrink with all the wettings to which it is exposed. In the form of mocasins, leggings, and hunting shirts, it is the most material part of the dress of many Indian tribes, and in the civilized world is used for breeches, gloves, gaiters, and various other purposes.

From the horns are made beautiful handles for various kinds of cutlery.

The timidity of the Deer is such, that it hurries away, even from the sight of a child, and it is but seldom that the hunter has any danger to apprehend, even from a wounded buck; it does but little injury to the fields of the planter, and is a universal favourite with old and young of both sexes in our Southern States.

The Virginian, or as we wish to designate it, the Common Deer, is the only large animal, if we except the bear, that is not driven from the vicinity of man by the report of the deer-driver's gun, or the crack of the hunter's rifle; the buffalo and the elk are now rarely seen east of the Mississippi. Hunted by hounds and shot at from day to day, the Deer may retreat from this persecution for a little while, but soon returns again to its original haunts. Although it scarcely ever occupies the same bed on successive nights, yet it is usually found in the same range, or drive as it is called, and often not fifty yards from the place, where it was started before. It is fond of lingering around fences and old fields, that are partially overspread with brush-wood, briar-patches and other cover, to screen it from observation. In the southern States the Deer, especially in summer when they are least disturbed, are fond of leaping the outer fences of plantations, lying through the day in some tangled thicket, overgrown with cane, vines and briars; and in such places you may be so fortunate as to start an old buck in August or September, and many an overgrown denizen of the forest has bowed his huge antlers and fallen a sacrifice to his temerity in seeking a resting-place too near some pea-patch, where his hoofs left traces for many weeks of his nightly depredations.

This habit of resting during the day in the near vicinity of their feeding ground, is however not universal. We during last summer were invited to visit a large cornfield in which a quantity of the Carolina cow-pea had been planted among the corn. This had been the nightly resort of the Deer during the whole summer—their tracks of various sizes covered the ground, as if flocks of sheep had resorted to it, and scarcely a pod or even a leaf was remaining on the vines. The Deer, however, were not in the vicinity, where there were several favourable and extensive covers; they were trailed to some small islands, in a marsh nearly two miles off. We ascertained that the Deer inhabiting the swamps on the east side of the Edisto river, where there are but few cultivated farms, were in the nightly habit of swimming the Edisto and visiting the pea-

fields in Barnwell, on the opposite side, returning before day-light to their customary haunts, some four or five miles distant.

The localities selected by Deer as places of rest and concealment during the day are various, such as the season of the year and the nature of the country and climate may suggest to the instincts of the animal. Although we have occasionally in mountainous regions, especially in the higher mountains of Virginia and the Green Mountains of Vermont, detected a Deer lying without concealment on an elevated ledge of bare rock, like the ibex and chamois on the Alps, yet as a general habit, the animal may be said to seek concealment, either among clumps of myrtle or laurel bushes, (*Kalmia*), in large fallen tree-tops, briar-patches, clusters of alder bushes, (*alnus*), or in tall broom-grass, (*Andropogon dissitiflorus*). In cold weather it prefers seeking its repose in some sheltered dry situation, where it is protected from the wind, and warmed by the rays of the sun; and on these occasions it may be found in briar-patches which face the south, or in tufts of broom-grass in old uncultivated fields. In warm weather it retires during the day to shady swamps, and may often be started from a clump of alder or myrtle bushes near some rivulet or cool stream. To avoid the persecution of moschetoës and ticks, it occasionally, like the moose in Maine, resorts to some stream or pond and lies for a time immersed in the water, from which the nose and a part of the head only project. We recollect an occasion, when on sitting down to rest on the margin of the Santee river, we observed a pair of antlers on the surface of the water near an old tree, not ten steps from us. The half-closed eye of the buck was upon us; we were without a gun, and he was, therefore, safe from any injury we could inflict on him. Anxious to observe the cunning he would display, we turned our eyes another way, and commenced a careless whistle, as if for our own amusement, walking gradually towards him in a circuitous route, until we arrived within a few feet of him. He had now sunk so deep in the water that an inch only of his nose, and slight portions of his prongs were seen above the surface. We again sat down on the bank for some minutes, pretending to read a book. At length we suddenly directed our eyes towards him, and raised our hand, when he rushed to the shore, and dashed through the rattling canebrake, in rapid style.

The food of the common Deer varies at different periods of the year. In winter, it feeds on buds of several kinds of shrubs, such as the wild rose the hawthorn, various species of bramble, (*Rubus*), the winter green (*Pyrola*), the Partridge Berry, (*Mitchella repens*), the Deer Leaf, (*Hopea tinctoria*), the bush Honeysuckle, (*Azalea*), and many others. In spring and summer it subsists on tender grasses, being very select in its choice

and dainty in its taste. At these seasons it frequently leaps fences, and visits the fields of the planter, taking an occasional bite at his young wheat and oats, not overlooking the green corn, (*Maize*,) and giving a decided preference to a field planted with cow-peas, which it divests of its young pods and tender leaves; nor does it pass lightly by berries of all kinds, such as the Huckleberry, Blackberry and Sloe, (*Viburnum prunifolium*.) We are informed by a friend that in the vicinity of Nashville, (Tennessee,) there is an extensive park containing about three hundred Deer, the principal food of which is the luxuriant Kentucky blue-grass, (*Poa pratensis*.) In autumn it finds an abundance of very choice food in the chestnuts, chinquepins and beech-nuts strewn over the ground. The localities of the various oaks are resorted to, and we have seen its tracks most abundantly under the Live Oak, (*Quercus virens*,) the acorns of which it appears to prefer to all others. We once observed three deer feeding on these acorns, surrounded by a flock of wild turkeys, all eagerly engaged in claiming their share. The fruit of the Persimmon tree, after having been ripened by the frosts of winter, falls to the ground, and also becomes a favourite food of the Deer.

Possessing such a choice of food, we might suppose this animal would be always fat: this, however, is not the case, and, except at certain seasons of the year, the Deer is rather poor. The bucks are always in fine order from the month of August to November, when we have seen some that were very fat. One which we killed weighed one hundred and seventy-five pounds. We have been informed that some have reached considerably over two hundred pounds. In November, and sometimes a little earlier, the rutting season commences in Carolina, when the neck of the buck begins to dilate to a large size. He is now constantly on foot, and nearly in a full run, in search of the does. On meeting with other males, tremendous battles ensue, when, in some rare instances, the weaker animal is gored to death; generally, however, he flies from the vanquisher, and follows him, crest fallen, at a respectful and convenient distance, ready to turn on his heels and scamper off at the first threat of his victorious rival. In these rencontres, the horns of the combatants sometimes become interlocked in such a manner that they cannot be separated, and the pugnacious bucks are consigned to a lingering and inevitable death by starvation. We have endeavoured to disengage these horns, but found them so completely entwined that no skill or strength of ours was successful. We have several times seen two, and on one occasion, three pairs of horns thus interlocked, and ascertained that the skulls and skeletons of the Deer had always been found attached. These battles only take place during the rutting season, when the horns are too firmly

attached to be separated from the skull. Indeed, we have seen a horn shot off in the middle by a ball, whilst the stump still continued firmly seated on the skull. The rutting season continues about two months, the largest and oldest does being earliest sought for, and those of eighteen months at a later period. About the month of January, the bucks drop their horns, when, as if conscious of having been shorn of their strength and honours, they seem humbled, and congregate peaceably with each other, seeking the concealment of the woods, until they can once more present their proud antlers to the admiring herd. Immediately after the rutting season, the bucks begin to grow lean. Their incessant travelling during the period of venery—their fierce battles with their rivals, and the exhaustion consequent on shedding and replacing their horns by a remarkably rapid growth, render them emaciated and feeble for several months. About three weeks after the old antlers have been shed, the elevated knobs of the young horns make their appearance. They are at first soft and tender, containing numerous blood-vessels, and the slightest injury causes them to bleed freely. They possess a considerable degree of heat, grow rapidly, branch off into several ramifications, and gradually harden. They are covered with a soft, downy skin, and are now in what is called “velvet.” When the horns are fully grown, which is usually in July or August, the buck shows a restless propensity to rid himself of the velvet covering, which has now lost its heat, and become dry: hence he is constantly engaged in rubbing his horns against bushes and saplings, often destroying the trees by wounding and tearing the bark, and by twisting and breaking off the tops. The system of bony development now ceases altogether, and the horns become smooth, hard, and solid.

The does are fattest from November to January. They gradually get thinner as the season of parturition approaches, and grow lean whilst suckling their young.

The young are, in Carolina, produced in the month of April; young does, however, seldom yeave till May or June. In the Northern States, they bring forth a little later, whilst in Florida and Texas the period is earlier. It is a remarkable, but well ascertained fact, that in Alabama and Florida, a majority of the fawns are produced in November. The doe conceals her young under a prostrate tree-top, or in a thick covert of grass, visiting them occasionally during the day, especially in the morning, evening, and at night. The young fawns, when only a few days old, are often found in so sound a sleep that we have, on several occasions, seen them taken up in the arms before they became conscious that they were captives. They are easily domesticated, and attach themselves to

their keepers in a few hours. A friend possesses a young deer that, when captured, during the last summer, was placed with a she goat, which reared it, and the parties still live in habits of mutual attachment. We have seen others reared by a cow. A goat, however, becomes the best foster-mother. They breed in confinement, but we have found them troublesome pets. A pair that we had for several years, were in the habit of leaping into our study through the open window, and when the sashes were down they still bounced through, carrying along with them the shattered glasses. They also seemed to have imbibed a vitiated and morbid taste, licked and gnawed the covers of our books, and created confusion among our papers. No shrub in the garden, however valuable to us, was sacred to them; they gnawed our carriage harness, and finally pounced upon our young ducks and chickens, biting off their heads and feet, leaving the body untouched.

The doe does not produce young until she is two years old, when she has one fawn. If in good order, she has two the following year. A very large and healthy doe often produces three, and we were present at Goose Creek when an immense one, killed by J. W. AUDUBON, was ascertained, on being opened, to contain four large and well formed fawns. The average number of fawns in Carolina is two, and the cases where three are produced are nearly as numerous as those in which young does produce only one at a birth.

The wild doe is attached to her young, and its bleat will soon bring her to its side, if she is within hearing. The Indians use a stratagem, by imitating the cry of the fawn, with a pipe made of a reed, to bring up the mother, which is easily killed by their arrows. We have twice observed the doe called up by this imitation of the voice of the young. She is, however, so timid that she makes no effort in defence of her captured offspring, and bounds off at the sight of man.

The common Deer is a gregarious animal, being found on our western prairies in immense scattered herds of several hundred. After the rutting season the males, as we have before stated, herd together and it is only during the season of intercourse that both sexes are found in company. The does, however, although congregating during a considerable portion of the year, are less gregarious than many species of African antelopes, the buffalo, or our domestic sheep; as they are found during the summer separated from the rest of the gang or troop, and are only accompanied by their young.

The Deer is one of the most silent of animals, and scarcely possesses any notes of recognition. The fawn has a gentle bleat that might be heard by the keen ears of its mother at the distance probably of a hundred

yards. We have never heard the voice of the female beyond a mere murmur when calling her young, except when shot, when she often bleats loudly like a calf in pain. The buck when suddenly started sometimes utters a snort, and we have at night heard him *emitting* a shrill whistling sound, not unlike that of the chamois of the Alps, that could be heard at the distance of half a mile. The keen sense of smell the Deer possess enables them to follow each other's tracks. We have observed them smelling on the ground and thus following each other's trail for miles. We were on an autumnal morning seated on a log in the pine lands of Carolina when a doe came running past us. In the course of ten minutes we observed a buck in pursuit, with his nose near the ground, following in all the windings of her course. Half an hour afterwards came a second buck, and during another interval a third small buck pursued the same trail. The sense of sight appears imperfect—as we have often, when standing still, perceived the Deer passing within a few yards without observing us, but we have often noticed the affrighted start when we moved our position or when they scented us by the wind. On one occasion we had tied our horse for some time at a stand;—on his becoming restless we removed him to a distance—a Deer pursued by dogs ran near the spot where the horse had originally stood, caught the scent, started suddenly back, and passed within a few feet of the spot where we were standing, without having observed us. Their sense of hearing is as keen as that of smell. In crawling towards them in an open wood, against the wind, you may approach within gun shot, but if you unfortunately break a stick, or create a rustling among the leaves, they start away in an instant.

This animal cannot exist without water, being obliged nightly to visit some stream or spring for the purpose of drinking. During the present year (1850) a general drought prevailed throughout our southern country. On the Hunting Islands between Beaufort and Savannah, the Deer, we were informed, nearly all perished in consequence of the streams on these Islands having dried up. Deer are fond of salt, and like many other wild animals resort instinctively to salt-licks or saline springs. The hunters, aware of this habit, watch at these “licks,” as they are called, and destroy vast numbers of them. We have visited some of these pools, and seen the Deer resorting to them in the mornings and evenings and by moon light. They did not appear to visit them for the mere purpose of drinking, but after walking around the sides, commenced licking the stones and the earth on the edges, preferring in this manner to obtain this agreeable condiment, to taking a sudden draught and then retiring. On the contrary they lingered for half an hour around the spring, and after

having strayed away for some distance, they often returned a second and even a third time to scrape the sides of it, and renew the licking process. Our common Deer may be said to be nocturnal in its habits, yet on the prairies, or in situations where seldom disturbed, herds of Deer may be seen feeding late in the morning and early in the afternoon. Their time for rest, in such situations, is generally the middle of the day. In the Atlantic States, where constantly molested by the hunters, they are seldom seen after sunrise, and do not rise from their bed until the dusk of the evening. The Deer is more frequently seen feeding in the day time during spring and summer, than in winter; a rainy day, and snowy wintery weather, also invite it to leave its uncomfortable hiding place and indulge in its roaming habits. We have no doubt, that in localities where Deer have been constantly hunted, they, from a sense of fear, allow you to approach much nearer to their place of concealment than in situations where they are seldom disturbed. They continue lying still, not because they are asleep or unaware of your approach, but because they are afraid to expose themselves to view, and hope by close concealment to be passed without being observed. We have seen them lying with their hind legs drawn under them ready for a spring—their ears pressed flat on the sides of the neck, and their eyes keenly watching every movement of the intruder. Under these circumstances your only chance of success is to ride slowly around the animal as if he was not observed, and suddenly fire before he leaps from his bed. This effect of fear, on your near approach, is not confined to our Deer; it may be seen in the common partridge, the snipe, and other game birds. Before being hunted, they are restless—are unwilling to assume the crouching posture called setting, and rise at a distance from their pursuers; but after having been a few times disturbed and shot at, they, in the language of sportsmen, become tame, and permit themselves to be nearly trodden on before they can be induced to rise; this apparent tameness is in reality wildness, and their squatting and hiding the effect of terror to which they are prompted by an instinct of self-preservation.

The gait of this Deer is various. In walking it carries its head very low, and pursues its course cautiously and silently, occasionally moving its ears and whisking its tail; the largest animal is usually the leader of the herd, which travel in what is called Indian file, there seldom being two abreast. Walking is the ordinary pace of the Deer unless frightened, or in some state of excitement. When first started, without being much alarmed, it gives two or three springs, alighting with apparent awkwardness on three feet—and immediately afterwards resting on the opposite side, erecting its white tail and throwing it from side to side. A few

high bounds succeed, whilst the head is turned in every direction to enable it to detect the cause of alarm. The leaps and high boundings of the Deer are so graceful, that we have never witnessed them without excitement and admiration. When, however, the Deer observes you before it is routed from its bed, it bolts off with a rush, running low to the ground, with its head and tail on a line with the body, and for a few hundred yards rivalling the speed of a race horse. But this rattling pace cannot be kept up for any length of time—after the first burst its speed slackens, it foams at the mouth, and exhibits other evidences of fatigue. We have sometimes seen it overtaken and turned by an active rider in the open wood, and under other favourable circumstances, and on one occasion a fat buck was headed by a fearless driver, lashed with his whip, brought to bay, and finally knocked in the head and taken without having been shot. We have witnessed a few instances where a pack of hounds, after a four hours' chase, succeeded in running down a Deer. These cases are, however, rare, nor would we give any encouragement to this furious Sylvan race, in which the horse and his mad rider are momentarily exposed to the danger of a broken neck from the many holes in the pine lands. The Deer, after an attempt at bringing it to bay, frequently succeeds in escaping from the hunter and the hounds, by dashing into a swamp or crossing a river, and even should it be captured, after a long chase the venison is found to be insipid and of no value.

In riding through the woods at night in the vicinity of Deer, we have often heard them stamp their feet, the bucks on such occasions giving a loud snort, then bounding off for a few yards and again repeating the stamping and snorting, which appear to be nocturnal habits.

Deer take the water freely, and swim with considerable rapidity ; their bodies are on such occasions submerged, their heads only being visible above the surface. We have witnessed them crossing broad rivers and swimming the distance of two miles. When thus under way, they cleave the water with such celerity that a boat can scarcely overtake them.

Along our southern sea-board the Deer, when fatigued by the hounds, plunge into the surf and swim off for a mile or two, floating or swimming back with the returning tide, when they ascend the beach near the same place where they entered the water.

As already remarked, the flesh of our common Deer is the best flavoured and most easy of digestion of all the species with which we are acquainted, except the black-tailed Deer ; it is superior to the Elk or Moose of our country, or the red Deer or Roebuck of Europe. It is, however, only a delicacy when it is fat, which is generally the case from the beginning of

August to the month of December. In Carolina, the haunch and loin only are served up on the tables of the planters, the shoulders and skin are the perquisites of the driver, or negro huntsman. The Indians eat every part of the Deer, not omitting the entrails and the contents of the stomach—the latter many of the tribes devour raw, without subjecting them to any cooking or roasting process. It is stated, even by white men, that the stomach, with all its half-digested ingredients, is very palatable. Hunger and hardships seldom fail to give a zest to the appetite. Vegetable food is scarce in the wilderness or on the prairies. The traveller who has long been obliged to sleep in a tent and make his toilet in the woods, soon becomes indifferent to the etiquette of civilized life, and does not inquire whether his dish has been prepared according to the recipe of the cookery-books. A Deer paunch contains a mixture of many ingredients, picked up from various shrubs, seeds, and grasses, and may become a substitute for vegetables where the kitchen-garden has not yet been introduced. According to a northern traveller (LYON'S Narrative, p. 242), who referred, however, to another animal, the reindeer of our continent, it is "acid and rather pungent, resembling a mixture of sorrel and radish leaves," its smell like "fresh brewer's grains." As we have never been subjected to the necessity of testing the virtues of this primitive chowder, we are unable to pronounce it a delicacy, and must leave the decision to those who may be disposed to make the experiment.

The capture of the common Deer exercised the ingenuity and patience of the Indian, ages before the pale faces intruded on his hunting-grounds, with their rifles, their horses, and hounds. He combatted with the wolf and the cougar for their share of the prey, leaving on our minds a melancholy impression of the near approach of the condition of savage life to that of the brute creation. Different modes of hunting were suggested by the peculiar face of the localities of the country, and the degrees of intelligence or native cunning of the several tribes. The bow and arrow evidently must have been in common use throughout the whole length and breadth of our land, as the numerous arrow-heads still every where turned up by the plough abundantly attest.

The Rein Deer, inhabiting the extensive, cold, and inhospitable regions of the British possessions to the north of Quebec, were caught in snares manufactured from the hide, and sometimes of the sinews, of the animal. During the season of their annual migrations, rude fences of brush-wood were constructed, which were a mile or two apart at the entrance, narrowing down to nearly a point at the other end, in which the snares were placed, and at the termination of this "cul de sac" was erected a high fence or pound, secured by stakes, stones, and other strong materials, in

which the Deer that escaped from the snares were finally enclosed and shot with arrows. The common Deer, however, is more suspicious and timid, and will seldom suffer itself to be circumvented in this manner.

The American Rein Deer is also brought near to the hunter lying in wait behind the concealment of a clump of bushes, or heap of stones, by the waving of a small flag of cloth, or a deer's tail, which, exciting its attention, it falls a sacrifice to its curiosity. This stratagem is also successfully practised on our western prong-horned Antelope.

The Common Deer is frequently brought within bow-shot by the Indians, who call up the does, as we have already mentioned, by imitating, with a pipe made of a reed, the bleating of the fawn, and also the bucks, by an imitation of the shrill, whistling sound which they emit during the rutting season. The wily savage often clothes himself in the hide of a Deer, with the horns and ears attached—imitating the walk and other actions of the animal, by which means he is enabled to approach and almost mingle with the herd, and kill several with his arrows before they take the alarm. Since the introduction of fire-arms, however, many tribes of Indians have laid aside the bow and arrow, and adopted the gun. The traders who visit them, usually supply them with an inferior article, and we have never seen any considerable number of Indians expert in the use of the rifle. The late Dr. LEITNER informed us that the Florida Indians seldom shot at a Deer beyond twenty-five or thirty yards, exercising great patience and caution before they ventured on firing; the result, however, under these favourable circumstances, was usually successful. We believe the Indians of North America never used poisoned arrows in the destruction of game, like the natives of Caffraria and other portions of Africa, or the aborigines of Brazil and the neighbouring regions of South America.

The white man conducts his hunting excursions in various modes suited to his tastes and adapted to the nature of the country in which he resides. In mountainous, rocky regions, where horses cannot be used with advantage, he goes on foot, armed with a rifle, carries no dog, and seeks for the Deer in such situations as his sagacity and experience suggest. He either espies him in his bed, or silently steals upon him behind the covert of the stem of a large tree whilst he is feeding, and leisurely takes a steady and fatal aim. On the contrary, in situations adapted to riding, where the woods are thickly clothed with underbrush, where here and there wide openings exist between briar-patches, and clumps of myrtle-bushes, as in the Southern States, the Deer are almost universally chased with hounds, and instead of the rifle, double-barrelled deer-guns, of different sizes, carrying from twelve to twenty buck-shot, are alone made use of by the hunters.

It may not be uninteresting to our readers if we point out the different modes in which Deer hunts are conducted.

In the early settlement of our country, when men hunted for food, and before they accustomed themselves to study their ease and comfort even in the chase, "still hunting," as it is termed, was universally practised. The wolves and other depredating animals, by which the colonists were surrounded, as well as the proximity of hostile Indians, almost precluded them for many years from raising a sufficient supply of sheep, hogs, and poultry. The cultivation of a small field furnished them with bread, while for meat they were chiefly dependent on the gun. Hence a portion of their time was from a kind of necessity devoted to the chase. The passion for hunting seems however to be innate with many persons, and we have observed that it often runs in families and is transmitted to their posterity, as is known to be the case with the descendants of the hunters in the Alps. There are even now many persons in our country, who devote weeks and months to the precarious employment of Deer hunting, when half the industry and fatigue in regular labour would afford their families every necessary and comfort. Hunting is a pleasant recreation, but a very unprofitable trade ; it often leads to idleness, intemperance, and poverty.

For success in still-hunting it is essential that the individual who engages in it, should be acquainted with the almost impenetrable depths of the forest, as well as the habits of the Deer. He must be expert in the use of the rifle, possess a large stock of patience, and be constitutionally adapted to endure great fatigue. Before the dawn of day, he treads the paths along which the animal strays in returning from its nightly rambles to the covert usually its resting-place for the day. He ascends an elevation, to ascertain whether he may not observe the object of his search feeding in the vallies. If the patience and perseverance of the morning are not attended with success, he seeks for the Deer in its bed—if it should be startled by his stealthy tread and spring up, it stops for a moment before bounding away, and thus affords him the chance of a shot ; even if the animal should keep on its course without a pause, he frequently takes a running, or what is called a chance shot, and is often successful.

There is another mode of deer hunting we saw practised many years ago in the Western parts of the State of New-York, which we regard as still more fatiguing to the hunter, and as an unfair advantage taken of the unfortunate animals. The parties sally out on a deep snow, covered by a crust, which sometimes succeeds a rain during winter. They use light snow-shoes and seek the Deer in situations where in the manner of the moose of Nova Scotia, they have trampled paths through the snow in

the vicinity of the shrubs on which they feed. When started from these retreats they are forced to plunge into the deep snow ; and breaking through the crust leave at every leap traces of blood from their wounded legs ; they are soon overtaken, sometimes by dogs, at other times by the hunters, who advance faster on their snow-shoes than the exhausted Deer, which fall an easy prey either to the hunter's knife or his gun. In this manner thousands of Deer were formerly massacred in the Northern States.

We have ascertained that our common Deer may be easily taken by the grey-hound. A pair of the latter, introduced into Carolina by Col. CATTEL, frequently caught them after a run of a few hundred yards. The Deer were trailed and started by beagles—the grey-hounds generally kept in advance of them, making high leaps in order to get a glimpse of the Deer which were soon overtaken, seized by the throat, and thrown down. The nature of the country, however, from its swamps and thick covers often prevented the huntsmen from coming up to the captured animal before it was torn and mutilated by the hounds, and many Deer could not be found, as the pack becomes silent as soon as the Deer is taken. We predict, however, that this will become the favourite mode of taking Deer on the open western prairies, where there are no trees or other obstructions, and the whole scene may be enacted within view of the hunters.

Some hunters, who are engaged in supplying the salt and red Sulphur Springs of Virginia with venison during summer, practise a novel and an equally objectionable mode in capturing the Deer. A certain number of very large steel-traps made by a blacksmith in the vicinity, are set at night in the waters of different streams at the crossing-places of the Deer. The animal when thus captured instead of tearing off its leg by violent struggles is said to remain standing still, as passive as a wolf when similarly entrapped. Another and still more cruel mode is sometimes practiced in the South : The Deer have particular places where they leap the fences to visit the pea-fields ; a sharpened stake is placed on the inside of the fence—the Deer in leaping over is perforated through the body by this treacherous spike, and is found either dead or dying on the following morning. It is also a frequent practice in the South for the hunter during clear nights to watch a pea-field frequented by Deer. To make sure of this game he mounts some tree, seats himself on a crotch or limb which is above the current that would convey the scent to the keen olfactories of the Deer, and from this elevation leisurely waits for an opportunity to make a sure shot.

In some parts of the Northern and Middle States the Deer are captured by the aid of boats. We observed this mode of hunting pursued at Saratoga and other lakes, and ascertained that it was frequently attended with

success. The hounds are carried to the hills to trail, and start the Deer before day light. Some of the hunters are stationed at their favourite crossing places to shoot them should they approach within gun shot. After being chased for an hour or two the Deer pushes for the lake. Here on some point of land a party lie in wait with a light and swift boat ; after the Deer has swam to a certain distance from the shore he is headed and approached by the rowers, a noose is thrown over the head, and the unfortunate animal drawn to the side of the boat, when the captors proceed to cut its throat in violation of all the rules of legitimate sporting.

Fire hunting is another destructive mode of obtaining Deer. In this case two persons are essential to success. A torch of resinous wood is carried by one of the party, the other keeps immediately in front with his gun. The astonished Deer instead of darting off seems dazzled by the light, and stands gazing at this newly kindled flame in the forest. The hunter sees his eyes shining like two tapers before him ; he fires and is usually successful ; sometimes there are several Deer in the gang, who start off for a few rods at the report of the gun, and again turn their eyes to the light. In this manner two or three are frequently killed within fifty yards of each other. This kind of hunting by firelight is often attended with danger to the cattle that may be feeding in the vicinity, and is prohibited by a law of Carolina, which is however frequently violated. The eyes of a cow are easily mistaken for those of a deer. We conversed with a gentleman who informed us that he had never indulged in more than one fire-hunt, and was then taught a lesson which cured him of his passion for this kind of amusement. He believed that he saw the eyes of a Deer and fired, the animal bounded off, as he was convinced, mortally wounded. In the immediate vicinity he detected another pair of eyes and fired again. On returning the next morning to look for his game, he found that he had slaughtered two favourite colts. Another related an anecdote of a shot fired at what was supposed to be the shining eyes of a Deer, and ascertained to his horror that it was a dog standing between the legs of a negro, who had endeavoured to keep him quiet. The dog was killed and the negro slightly wounded.

There is still another mode of Deer hunting which remains to be described. It is called "driving," and is the one in general practice, and the favourite pastime among the hospitable planters of the Southern States. We have at long intervals, occasionally joined in these hunts, and must admit that in the manner in which they were conducted, this method of Deer hunting proved an exciting and very agreeable recreation. Although we regret to state that it is pursued by some persons at all seasons of the year, even when the animals are lean and the venison of no value, yet the

more thoughtful and judicious huntsmen are satisfied to permit the Deer to rest and multiply for a season, and practice a little self-denial, during summer when the oppressive heats which usually prevail—the danger of being caught in heavy showers—and the annoyance of gauze-flies, mosquitoes, and ticks, present serious drawbacks to its enjoyment. The most favourable season for this kind of amusement is from the beginning of October to January. The Deer are then in fine order ; the heats of summer are over ; the crops of rice gathered, and the value of the planter's crop can be calculated. The autumn of the Southern States possesses a peculiar charm ; high winds seldom prevail, and the air is soft and mellow ; although many of the summer warblers have migrated farther to the south, yet they have been replaced by others : The blue-bird, cat-bird, and mocking-bird have not yet lost their song, and the swallows and night-hawks are skimming through the air in irregular and scattered groups on their way to the tropics. Vegetation has been checked, but not sufficiently destroyed to give a wintry aspect to the landscape. The *Gentians Gerardias* and other autumnal flowers are still disclosing a few lingering blossoms and emitting their fragrance. The forest trees present a peculiar and most striking appearance. A chemical process has been going on among the leaves, since the first cool nights have suspended the circulation, giving to those of the maple and sweet gum, a bright scarlet hue, which contrasted with the yellow of the hickory, and the glossy green of the *magnolia grandiflora*, besides every shade of colour that can be imagined, render an American forest, more striking and beautiful than that of any other country. It is the season of the year that invites to recreation and enjoyment. The planters have been separated during the summer ; some have travelled from home—others have resided at their summer retreats ;—they are now returning to their plantations, and the intercourse of the neighbourhood, that has been suspended for a season, is renewed. We recall with satisfaction some past scenes of pleasureable associations of this kind. The space already taken up by this article will preclude us from entering into minute detail, and restrict us to a few incidents which will present the general features of a Carolina Deer hunt. We comply with the oft-repeated invitation to make our annual visit to our early and long-tried friend Dr. DESEL at his hospitable residence some twenty miles from the city, which his friends have named Liberty Hall. The mind requires an occasional relaxation as well as the body. We have resolved to fly for a day or two, from the noise and turmoil of the city—to leave books and cares behind us—to break off the train of serious thought—to breathe the fresh country air, and mingle in the innocent sports of the field and the forest. Reader, you will go with us and

enter into our feelings and enjoyments. As we approach the long avenue a mile from the residence of the companion of thirty-five years, we are espied by his domestics who welcome us with a shout, and inform us that their "Boss" is looking out for us. Our friend soon perceives us, and hurries to the gate. How pleasant are the greetings of friendship—the smiling look of welcome, the open hand, and the warm heart of hospitality.

The usual invitation is sent to a neighbour, to lunch, dine, and meet a friend. The evening is spent in social converse and closed with the family bible, and offerings of gratitude and praise to the Giver of all good. The sleep of him, who has escaped from the din of the city to the quiet of the country, is always refreshing. The dawn of day invites us to a substantial breakfast. The parties now load their double-barrelled guns, whilst the horses are being saddled. The horn is sounded, and the driver, full of glee, collects his impatient hounds. The party is unexpectedly augmented by several welcome guests. Our intelligent friend HARRIS, from New-Jersey, has come to Carolina, to be initiated into the mysteries of Deer hunting, as a preparation to farther exploits on the Western prairies, among the elk and the buffalo; with him comes AUDUBON, the Nestor of American ornithology, and his son, together with Dr. WILSON. After the first greetings are over, we hasten to saddle additional horses for those of our guests, who are disposed to join us. The old ornithologist, having no relish for such boyish sports, sallies to the swamps in search of some rare species of woodpecker. We proceed to the drives, as they are called, viz., certain woods, separated by old fields and various openings, in some parts of which the Deer have their usual run, where the parties take their stands. These drives are designated by particular names, and we are familiar with Crane pond, Gum thicket, the Pasture, the Oak swamp, and a number of bays, one of which we would be willing to forget, for there we missed a Deer, and the bay was named after us, to our mortification. The driver is mounted on a hardy, active, and sure-footed horse, that he may be enabled to turn the course of the Deer, if he attempts to run back, or to stop the dogs. We were carried round to our stands by our host, when a Deer bounced up before us; in an instant a loud report is heard waking the echoes of the forest—the animal leaps high into the air, and tumbles to the ground. Thus, our venison is secured, and we carry on our farther operations from the mere love of sport. Anxious to give our friend HARRIS an opportunity of killing his first Deer, we place him at the best stand. Our mutual wishes are soon gratified. He is stationed at the edge of a bay—a valley overgrown with bay-trees (*Magnolia glauca*)—which from that day received the cognomen of Harris' bay. The hounds after considerable trailing rouse two noble bucks, one of them bounds out

near our friend. He is obliged to be ready in a moment, before the Deer comes in the line with another hunter. At the report of his gun we perceive that the buck is wounded. "Mind," cries out friend WILSON, "your shot have whistled past me." Friend H. grows pale at the thought of having endangered the life of another, but we comfort him by stating, that his shot had not reached within fifty yards of the nervous hunter, and moreover, that the old buck was wounded and would soon be his. We observed where he had laid down in the grass, and was started up again by the dogs. Now for a chase of a wounded buck. He takes through an old field once planted with cotton, now full of ruts and ditches, and grown up with tall broom-grass. We agree to let the boys have the pleasure of the chase whilst we are the silent spectators. They bound over ditches and old corn-fields, firing as they run. Suddenly the hounds become silent, and then the loud sounding of the horn is heard mingled with the whoops of the hunters, which inform us, that the game is secured; it proves to be a majestic buck. The successful hunter is now obliged to submit to the ordeal of all who have fleshed their maiden sword, and killed their first Deer. "I submit," he said good naturedly, "but spare my spectacles and whiskers." So his forehead and cheeks were crossed with the red blood of the buck, and the tail was stuck in his cap. The hunt proceeded merrily and successfully. Young AUDUBON, however, had not yet obtained a shot. At length a Deer was started near our host. He would not shoot it, but strove to drive it to his neighbour. He ran after it, and shouted, stumbled over a root, and in the fall threw off his spectacles; but as he was groping for them among the leaves, he ascertained that his generous efforts had been successful; the Deer had been turned to Mr. AUDUBON. One barrel snapped—then came a sharp report from the other—a loud whoop succeeded, and we soon ascertained that another Deer had fallen. We now conceived that we had our wishes for a successful hunt fully gratified; the dinner hour had arrived. Five noble Deer were strung upon the old pecan-tree in sight of our festive hall. The evening passed off in pleasant conversation—some of those present displayed their wit and poetical talents by giving the details of the hunt in an amusing ballad, which however has not yet found its way into print. Thus ended a Carolina Deer hunt.

We regret to be obliged to state, that the Deer are rapidly disappearing from causes that ought not to exist. There are at present not one-fifth of the number of Deer in Carolina that existed twenty years ago. In the Northern and Middle States, where the farms have been subdivided, and the forests necessarily cleared, the Deer have disappeared

because there was no cover to shelter them. In the Southern States, however, where there are immense swamps subject to constant inundations and pine barrens too poor for cultivation, they would remain undiminished in numbers were it not for the idle and cruel practice of destroying them by firelight, and hunting them in the spring and summer seasons by overseers and idlers. There is a law of the State forbidding the killing of Deer during certain months in the year. It is, however, never enforced, and Deer are exposed for sale in the markets of Charleston and Savannah at all seasons. In some neighbourhoods, where they were formerly abundant, now none exist, and the planters have given up their hounds. In New-Jersey and Long Island, where the game laws are strictly enforced, Deer are said to be on the increase. In some parts of Carolina, where the woods are enclosed with fences, not sufficiently high to prevent the Deer from straying out, but sufficient to prevent the hunters from persecuting them in summer, they have greatly multiplied and stocked the surrounding neighbourhoods. If judicious laws were framed and strictly enforced the Deer could be preserved for ages in all our Southern States, and we cannot refrain from submitting this subject to the consideration of our southern legislators.

GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION.

This animal is found in the State of Maine ; north of this it is replaced by larger species, the moose and reindeer. It exists sparingly in Upper Canada. In all the Atlantic States it is still found, although in diminished numbers. Where care has been used to prevent its being hunted at unseasonable periods of the year, as in New-York and New-Jersey, it is said to be rather on the increase. In the mountainous portions of Virginia it is hunted with success. It is still rather common in North and South Carolina, Georgia and Florida, especially in barren or swampy regions, of which vast tracts remain uncultivated. In Mississippi, Missouri, Arkansas, and Texas, it supplies many of the less industrious inhabitants with a considerable portion of their food. It is very abundant in Texas and New Mexico, and is a common species in the northern parts of Mexico. We cannot say with confidence that it exists in Oregon, and in California it is replaced by the black tailed Deer.—*C. Richardsonii*.

GENERAL REMARKS.

This species has been given under different names, and we might have added a long list of synonymes. The specimens we saw in Maine and

at Niagara were nearly double the size of those on the hunting islands in South Carolina. The Deer that reside permanently in the swamps of Carolina are taller and longer legged than those in the higher grounds. The deer of the mountains are larger than those on the sea-board, yet these differences, the result of food or climate, will not warrant us in multiplying them into different species.

Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1851. "Cervus virginianus, Common American Deer [Article 1, Pl. LXXXI, fawn]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 2, 220–239. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322392>.

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