CERVUS VIRGINIANUS.—PENNANT.

COMMON AMERICAN DEER.

PLATE CXXXVI.—MALE and FEMALE.

(FAWN.) PLATE LXXXI.—WINTER PELAGE.

In our article on the Virginian Deer (vol. ii. p. 220), we gave descriptions of the characters and habits of this species ; we now present figures of the adult male and female.

We have not much information to add to that already given : it may be of interest, however, to notice the annual changes which take place in the growth of the horns, from adolescence to maturity, and the decline which is the result of age.

At Hyde Park, on the estate of J. R. STUYVESANT, Esq., Dutchess county, New York, seven or eight Deer were kept for many years, and several raised annually. We had the opportunity at the hospitable mansion of Mr. STUYVESANT, of examining a series of horns, all taken from the same buck as they were annually shed, from the first spikes to the antlers that crowned his head when killed ; and we now give a short memorandum showing the progress of their growth from year to year. In 1842, when this buck was one year old, his horns (spikes) had each one rudimentary prong—one about five eighths of an inch long, the other scarcely visible ; in 1843 they had two prongs four to six inches long ; in 1844, three prongs, and brow antlers, longest prong eight inches ; in 1845, a little larger in diameter, brow antlers longer and curved ; 1846, rather less throughout in size ; 1847, the two last prongs quite shortened. These last were somewhat broken by an accident, but evidently show that the animal had lost some degree of vigour. Age when killed, six years.

It should be observed that this animal was restricted to a park and was partially domesticated, being occasionally fed a little in the winter season ; and being thus deprived of the wider range of the forest, the horns may not have exhibited all the peculiarities of the wild unrestrained buck.

We think however that the above will give a tolerably correct idea of the operations of nature in the annual production and conformation of the horns. They become longer and more branched for several years, until the animal has arrived at maturity, when either from age or disease they begin to decline.

In connection with this subject it may not be uninteresting to notice the

Drawn from Nature by J. W. Audubon

On Stone by W. E. Hitchcock

Common or Virginian Deer.

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effect of castration on the horns of the buck. When this operation has been performed during the season when the horns are fully grown, it is said they are not dropped, but continue on the head for many years; when the operation has been performed after they are dropped, there is no subsequent growth of horns, and the head appears ever afterwards like that of a doe.

We had an opportunity at the Blue Sulphur Springs in Virginia, of examining two tame bucks which had been castrated during the time that their horns were in velvet. Their horns continued to grow for several years; the antlers were of enormous length, and very irregularly branched, but the velvet was still retained on them; they presented a soft spongy appearance, and from slight scratches or injuries were continually bleeding; the neck had ceased to swell periodically as in the perfect bucks, they had become very large, seemed to be quite fat, and when first seen at a distance we supposed them to be elks.

Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1854. "Cervus virginianus, Common American Deer [Article 2, Pl. CXXXVI, male and female]." *The quadrupeds of North America* 3, 168–169. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322393>.

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