Tr. R.
A916Q
v. 1

Biology Dept. Library

INTRODUCTION.

In presenting the following pages to the public, the authors desire to say a few words explanatory of the subject on which they have written. The difficulties they have attempted to surmount, and the labour attending their investigations, have far exceeded their first anticipations.

Many of the "Quadrupeds of North America" were long since described by European authors, from stuffed specimens; and in every department of Natural History additions to the knowledge of the old writers have been making for years past; researches and investigations having been undertaken by scientific observers in all parts of the world, and many specimens accumulated in the Museums of Europe. Comparatively little, however, has of late been accomplished toward the proper elucidation of the animals which inhabit the fields, forests, fertile prairies, and mountainous regions of our widely-extended and diversified country.

The works of HARLAN and of GODMAN were confined to the limited number of species known in their day. The valuable "Fauna Boreali Americana" of RICHARDSON was principally devoted to the description of species which exist in the British Provinces, north of the United States; and the more recent work of Dr. DEKAY professes to describe only the Quadrupeds of the State of New-York, although giving a catalogue of those noticed by authors as existing in other portions of North America.

Several American and European Zoologists have, however, at different times, given the results of their investigations in various scientific journals, thus making it important for us to examine numberless

papers, published in different cities of Europe and America. We have, in all cases, sought to discover and give due credit to every one who has in this manner made known a new species; but as possibly some author may have published discoveries in a journal we have not seen, we must at once announce our conviction, that the task of procuring and reading all the zoological papers scattered through the pages of hundreds of periodicals, in many different languages, is beyond our power, and that no one can reasonably complain when we take the liberty of pronouncing for ourselves on new or doubtful species without hesitation, from the sources of knowledge to which we have access, and from our own judgment.

The geographical range which we have selected for our investigations is very extensive, comprising the British and Russian possessions in America, the whole of the United States and their territories, California, and that part of Mexico north of the tropic of Cancer; we having arrived at the conclusion, that in undertaking the natural history of a country, our researches should not be confined by the artificial boundaries of States—which may be frequently changed—but by those divisions the limits of which are fixed by nature, and where new forms mark the effects of a low latitude and warm climate. In this way America is divided into three parts:—North America, which includes all that country lying north of the tropics; Central or Tropical America, the countries within the tropics; and South America, all that country south of the tropic of Capricorn.

Within the tropical region peculiar forms are presented in every department of nature,—we need only instance the Monkey tribe among the animals, the Parrots among the birds, and the Palms among the plants.

A considerable portion of the country to which our attention has been directed, is at the present period an uncultivated and almost unexplored wild, roamed over by ferocious beasts and warlike tribes of Indians.

The objects of our search, Quadrupeds, are far less numerous than birds at all times, and are, moreover, generally nocturnal in their habits, and consequently obtained with far greater difficulty than the latter.

Although the *Genera* may be easily ascertained, by the forms and

dental arrangements peculiar to each, many *species* so nearly approach each other in size, while they are so variable in colour, that it is exceedingly difficult to separate them, especially closely allied squirrels, hares, mice, shrews, &c., with positive certainty.

We have had our labours lightened, however, by many excellent friends and gentlemen in different portions of the country, who have, at great trouble to themselves, procured and sent us various animals—forwarded to us notes upon the habits of different species, procured works on the subject otherwise beyond our reach, and in many ways excited our warmest feelings of gratitude. Mr. J. K. TOWNSEND, of Philadelphia, allowed us to use the rare and valuable collection of Quadrupeds which he obtained during his laborious researches on the western prairies, the Rocky Mountains, and in Oregon, and furnished us with his notes on their habits and geographical distribution. SPENCER F. BAIRD, Esq., of Carlisle, Pennsylvania, aided us by carefully searching various libraries for notes and information in regard to species published in different journals, and also by obtaining animals from the wilder portions of his State, &c.; Dr. BARRITT, of Abbeville, S. C., prepared and mounted specimens of *Lepus aquaticus*, and several other species; Dr. THOMAS M. BREWER, of Boston, favoured us with specimens of a new species of shrew-mole (*Scalops Breweri*), and sundry arvicolæ; EDMUND RUFFIN, Esq., of Virginia, sent us several specimens of the rodentia inhabiting that State, and obliged us by communicating much information in regard to their geographical range; the late Dr. JOHN WRIGHT, of Troy, N. Y., furnished us valuable notes on the various species of quadrupeds found in the northern part of the State of New-York, and several specimens; Dr. WURDEMAN, of Charleston, supplied us with several specimens from Cuba, thereby enabling us to compare them with genera and species existing in America. To Professor LEWIS R. GIBBES, of the College of Charleston, we express our thanks, for several specimens of rare quadrupeds, and for his kindness in imparting to us much information and scientific knowledge.

Among others to whose zeal and friendship we are most indebted, we are proud to name: Dr. GEO. C. SHATTUCK and Dr. GEO. PARKMAN, of

Boston; J. PRESCOTT HALL, Esq., JAMES G. KING, Esq., Major JOHN LECONTE, Mr. J. G. BELL, and ISSACHAR COZZENS, of New-York; Hon. DANIEL WADSWORTH, of Hartford; W. O. AYRES, Esq., of Sag Harbour, Long Island; EDWARD HARRIS, Esq., of Moorestown, New Jersey; Dr. SAMUEL GEORGE MORTON and SAMUEL BISPHAM, Esq., of Philadelphia; WM. CASE, Esq., Cleveland, Ohio; OGDEN HAMMOND, Esq., of South Carolina; GIDEON B. SMITH, Esq., M.D., of Baltimore; Messrs. P. CHOUTEAU, Jr. & Co., St. Louis; Sir GEORGE SIMPSON, of the Hudson's Bay Fur Company; JOHN MARTYN, Jr., Quebec; Mr. FOTHERGILL, of Canada, &c., &c., &c.

For the sake of convenience and uniformity we have written in the plural number, although the facts stated, and the information collected, were obtained at different times by the authors in their individual capacities.

Without entering into details of the labours of each in this undertaking, it will be sufficient to add, that the history of the habits of our quadrupeds was obtained by both authors, either from personal observation or through the kindness of friends of science, on whose statements full reliance could be placed.

For the designation of species, and the letter-press of the present volume, the junior author is principally responsible.

In our Illustrations we have endeavoured (we hope not without success) to place before the public a series of plates, which are not only scientifically correct, but interesting to all, from the varied occupations, expressions, and attitudes, we have given to the different species, together with the appropriate accessories, such as trees, plants, landscapes, &c., with which the figures of the animals are relieved; and we have sought to describe those represented, so as not only to clear away the obscurity which had gathered over some species, but to make our readers acquainted with their habits, geographical distribution, and all that we could ascertain of interest about them, and the mode of hunting or destroying such as are pursued either to gratify the appetite, to furnish a rich fur or skin, or in order to get rid of dangerous or annoying neighbours.

Audubon, John James and Bachman, John. 1851. "Introduction." *The quadrupeds of North America* 1, v–viii. <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322461>.

View This Item Online: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/item/108513>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.322461>

Permalink: <https://www.biodiversitylibrary.org/partpdf/322461>

Holding Institution

Duke University Libraries (archive.org)

Sponsored by

Duke University Libraries

Copyright & Reuse

Copyright Status: Not provided. Contact Holding Institution to verify copyright status.

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>.