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AFRICAN BUFFALO IS ONE OF THE MOST DANGEROUS OF ANIMALS TO HUNT

Groups of four of the principal species of wild oxen living today are on exhibition in Field Museum. Photographs and accounts of three of these great bovines—the American bison, the Indian or water buffalo, and the Asiatic gaur ox or seladang—have appeared in FIELD MUSEUM NEWS at various times during the past few years as these exhibits were installed. It seems appropriate, therefore, to make the series complete in these pages by giving attention to the fourth group—the African buffalo—an older but equally interesting exhibit which is to be seen in Carl E. Akeley Memorial Hall (Hall 22).

The African buffalo, like its Indian cousin, the water buffalo, is a true buffalo, in contrast to the American bison which, while commonly referred to as a buffalo, does not, strictly speaking, so classify. Unlike the Indian buffalo, that of Africa has never been domesticated.

There are several varieties of African buffalo, the cape buffalo of South Africa being the best known. The animals are found over a wide range, however, embracing the greater part of the continent—west, central, south and east. Those in the Museum group are of the East African variety. Aside from the smaller red buffalo of West Africa, the differences in the animals found in the various localities are minor in character.

The group in Field Museum consists of specimens collected by the late Carl E. Akeley on the Field Museum African Expedition of 1905-06, and prepared for exhibition by him a few years later. It is the last piece of work for Field Museum completed by this

famous taxidermist. At the time of its preparation it represented a distinct innovation in museum technique, being the first group to be prepared anywhere by a new process originated by Mr. Akeley. It is still regarded as the most successful work done by this process, in which the skin

buffalo, but the latter is broader in body and perhaps more nearly approaches the weight of the gaur. The American bison, while often attaining great size, is usually smaller than either its African or Asiatic relatives.

The African buffalo is regarded by big game hunters as one of the most dangerous of all wild beasts. Opinion is divided as to whether or not it is more dangerous than the lion, but for making unprovoked charges upon man the preponderance of potential peril probably lies with the buffalo. When wounded this animal will charge with extreme ferocity, and it sometimes even lies in wait for the hunter and makes a vicious charge. The danger is increased by the fact that the buffalo roam in herds up to several hundred, whereas lions are seldom encountered in groups of more than six to ten at the most. Buffalo usually feed in dry upland where there is light

scrub and coarse grass. During the heat of the day they retire to shelter in rushes and heavy jungle. Hunting them in such places is very hazardous.

The horns of African buffalo are very large and heavy, with broad thickened bosses which almost meet in the center of the forehead. The record width of the horns is fifty-six inches.

In color the animal is blackish, but very young or partly grown specimens are frequently reddish brown. The coat is very thin, and in old age may be almost bare.

The Museum group consists of three bulls, a cow, and a young calf.



African Buffalo

This group, the work of the late Carl E. Akeley, with the more recent groups of gaur ox, Indian water buffalo, and American bison, gives the Museum a representation of four important kinds of great wild bovines.

of the animal is modeled directly against clay, then temporarily set in plaster applied to the outside, after which the clay is removed and the supporting manikin built onto the skin from the inside—practically a reversal of the method usually pursued in the mounting of animals. This Akeley innovation is especially adaptable to the preparation of thin haired animals in which it is desired to obtain a flesh-like appearance.

Opinion as to which is the largest of the various great oxen depends somewhat upon the point of view. The gaur ox probably weighs the most, on the average. The Indian water buffalo is taller than the African

preserved in a stratum of peat at Ainsworth, Nebraska, was examined. Two specimens of fossil rhinoceroses were collected for the Museum in the Bad Lands of South Dakota.

Chinese Temple Embroideries

Large and strikingly beautiful embroidered silk panels which once decorated a huge altar in a Lama temple at Peking, China, have been added to the exhibits in Hall 32 (West Gallery). They were collected some years ago by an expedition led by Dr. Berthold Laufer, Curator of Anthropology. The embroideries date back to the K'ien-lung period (1736-95). They are decorated with elaborate symbolical pictures. Included in the designs are peaches of Paradise, believed to confer immortality

on anyone who ate them, and bats symbolizing the blessings of old age, wealth, health, virtue, and natural death. Shown with the panels are streamers or pennants embroidered with elaborate floral sprays. These were suspended from the ceiling of the temple, and hung down in front of the altar to hide an image from direct view.

Botanist from Africa at Museum

Dr. E. P. Phillips of the National Herbarium, Pretoria, South Africa, spent several days as a visitor at Field Museum at the end of July. Dr. Phillips, under grants from the Carnegie Corporation and certain South African organizations, is making a study of the botanical institutions of the United States.

Change in Visiting Hours

Field Museum visiting hours, which have been 9 A.M. to 6 P.M. daily during the summer months, will change to the autumn schedule—9 A.M. to 5 P.M.—on Tuesday, September 4, the day after Labor Day. These hours will continue until October 31. On November 1 the winter hours, 9 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., will go into effect, continuing until March 31. During this period, however, the Museum will be open until 5 P.M. on Sundays.

Fossil Rhinoceroses Collected

A number of fossil-bearing localities were visited in July by Associate Curator E. S. Riggs of the Department of Geology. A deposit of Mastodon and camel bones



1934. "American Buffalo is One of the Most Dangerous of Animals to Hunt."
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