

# Field Museum News

Published Monthly by Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago

Vol. 8

JANUARY, 1937

No. 1

## EXHIBIT OF HOMALODOTHERIUM, ONE OF RAREST OF ALL PREHISTORIC MAMMALS

By ELMER S. RIGGS

Associate Curator of Paleontology

One of the strangest of all the fossil mammals of South America is that known as Flower's *Homalodotherium*. This animal lived during the Miocene period, estimated at about fifteen million years ago. Its fossil remains were first discovered in Patagonia only a little more than sixty years ago. For many years thereafter the animal was known only from specimens of the skull, odd bones of legs, and one entire foot.

A fortunate find in 1923, by the Marshall Field Paleontological Expedition to Argentina and Bolivia, of most of the bones of one of these animals, has made possible reconstruction of a practically complete skeleton. This mounted skeleton, the only one in the world of this species, was placed on exhibition last month in Ernest R. Graham Hall (Hall 38). It was assembled by Preparator J. H. Quinn.

From a study of the bones, the general size and proportions of the animal and the peculiarities of leg and foot have been ascertained. Some of its habits also have been determined with certainty. These studies were made by an eminent authority, Dr. William Berryman Scott, of Princeton University, and published in an elaborate memoir by Field

Museum in 1929. Additional facts have been gathered, and additional small bones recovered while the skeleton was being reconstructed. A model, one-fourth natural size, showing the animal as it is believed to have appeared in life, has been made by Preparator Phil. C. Orr, and has been placed on exhibition in the same case as the skeleton.

*Homalodotherium* is known to have been a sturdy, heavy-bodied and strong limbed

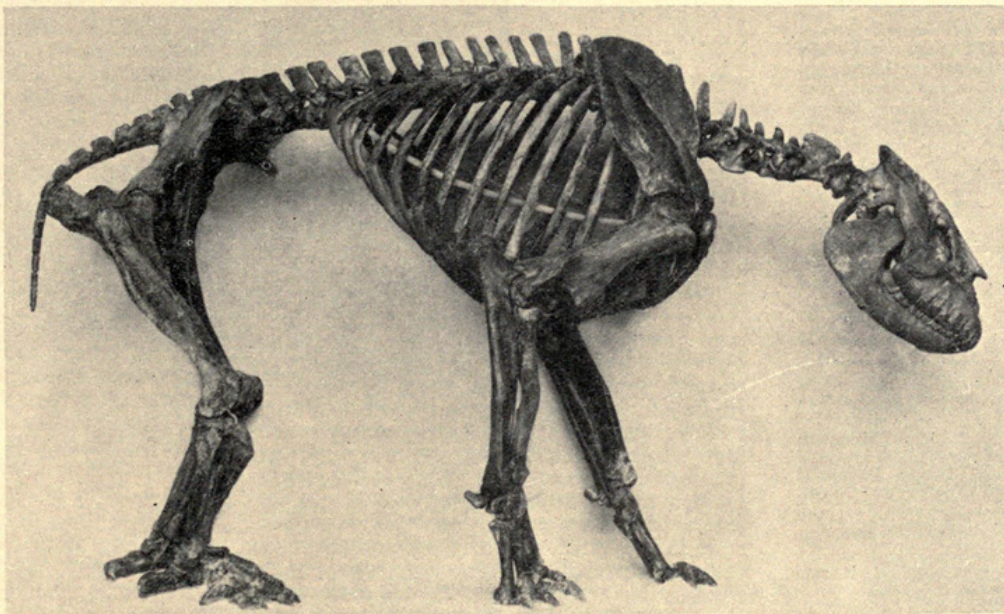
the rhinoceros family; its grinding teeth were fitted for feeding on vegetation. It was entirely without tusks or horns as a means of defense. Its forelegs were relatively long, and the bones have the peculiar structure observed in animals that dig. The forefoot was broad and armed with stout claws, clearly used for digging. The hind legs were shorter, more massive, and armed with bear-like plantigrade feet. They were well adapted for supporting the

animal in the act of digging, and may have enabled it to rear upright while feeding from trees. Like the ground sloth it may have fed upon roots and tubers as well as upon fruit or foliage.

The homalodotheres were a rare line of animals which are known from no later period than the Miocene. Even from that and from earlier periods only a very few fossil remains of nearly related animals are known.

The specimen was found by this writer in blocks of sandstone which had fallen from the face of a cliff and were being rapidly worn away by waves on the beach, along the eastern shore of Patagonia. This locality is a well-

known collecting ground from which the remains of many other kinds of fossil animals have been recovered.



The World's Only Mounted Skeleton of Homalodotherium

One of the strangest and rarest of South American fossil mammals, recently placed on exhibition in Ernest R. Graham Hall. The animal in life was nearly as large as an ox.

animal, as tall as an ox, but shorter in neck and body. Its head was similar in proportions to that of certain extinct members of

### MRS. F. D. ROOSEVELT WRITES OF FIELD MUSEUM VISIT

As reported in the December issue of FIELD MUSEUM NEWS, Mrs. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, wife of the President of the United States, recently visited Field Museum, and inspected the activities of the Works Progress Administration project in which 176 men and women have been given employment at this institution. She later wrote her impressions, in her column "My Day," published in newspapers all over the country through United Feature Syndicate, which has kindly given permission for reprinting here the following interesting excerpts from this copyrighted article.

By ELEANOR ROOSEVELT

I thought I had seen every type of Works Progress activity that we had in this country, but I had reckoned without Chicago. I have just come back from Field Museum. Since I had never been there before, the Museum itself would have been an exciting experience for me, particularly as I entered through the rooms where Malvina Hoffman's

work shows us the development of the human race and all the different types to be found throughout the world.

I wanted to spend hours there instead of a few minutes. I came away with the feeling that I had seen art used in combination with science to the advantage of both. My admiration, already great for the skill of the artist who did this work, is augmented a hundredfold.

We really went, however, to see what the WPA people were doing, and I came away tremendously proud of the contribution which these workers have made, not just to the Museum, but to the tax-payers of the state of Illinois. Here is a group of people—able, industrious, intelligent, with skills of their own—not able to find work. In the Museum they have adapted these skills, under the patient direction of the Museum Director, Mr. Simms, and developed new skills in a number of extremely technical occupations.

A beautiful doorway is being reconstructed from tiny fragments, foliage is being made for Museum groups, the mending of vases

and the practical reconstruction of fragments of old pieces of pottery are under way. Miss Warren is using remarkable skill to mend old mummy cloths, Persian mattresses, and other beautiful pieces of material.

There is an increased force in the print shop and the binding of pamphlets is going on. Men and women are cleaning and preserving the skeletons of all kinds of animals. As I looked at the fine work one woman was doing, it occurred to me that it would not take more patience and skill to put together the parts of a watch.

### DR. OSGOOD TO COLLECT IN ASIA

Dr. Wilfred H. Osgood, Curator of the Department of Zoology, is sailing for French Indo-China on January 9. He will spend several months in that country and neighboring territory making zoological collections. He expects to obtain specimens for a new mammal habitat group planned for William V. Kelley Hall, a bird habitat group for Hall 20, and a variety of small mammals, birds, and other kinds of animals.



Riggs, Elmer S. 1937. "Exhibit of Homalodotherium, One of Rarest of all Prehistoric Mammals." *Field Museum news* 8(1), 1-1.

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