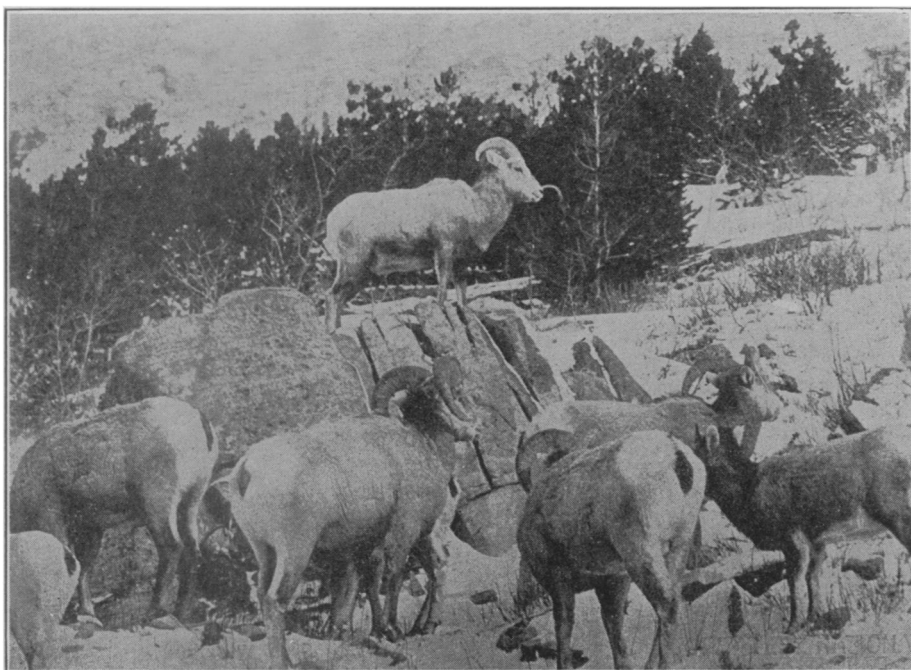


World's Greatest Menagerie Enters Winter Quarters



WHEN WINTER COMES

The mountain sheep descend to the valleys and lose much of their shyness.

By FRANK THONE

Winter is a time of trial for most menageries. The elephants shiver (and how an elephant can shiver!), the lions bristle their manes with the cold, the giraffes are threatened with sore throat by the yard, and the expensive and sensitive *bandar log* give most disquieting evidence of their kinship to supercilious man by contracting pneumonia and tuberculosis in most human fashion. No, circus owners and zoo curators are not happy persons when winter comes.

Yet the owner of the largest menagerie in the world worries about winter very little indeed. Not for him are expensive animal houses with boiler plants for steam heat and mercury vapor arcs to keep the creatures healthy with their vitamin-forming light. Not for him the big bills for veterinary doctors and their quart-size doses and pills as big as golf balls. Uncle Sam owns thousands of animals where the biggest circuses have mere dozens, and they are scattered over an area almost as large as all Europe, part of which has a winter climate as severe as that of Siberia; and he lets them wander out of doors and shift for themselves, snow or shine. And the vast assorted American Noah's Ark thrives on it and seems to like it.

The secret of it is, of course, that

the animals in Uncle Sam's great menagerie are all of them hardy children of the North, who couldn't be coaxed into steam-heated winter quarters even if such existed. Elk and moose, bison and antelope, big-horn sheep and mountain goat, they ask nothing better than to be allowed to range the plains and timber edges, scraping aside the snow with their hoofs for the natural hay underneath or browsing the twigs of bushes and the bark of trees; while others, like the bear and the beaver, sleep securely in their dens or houses until spring shall come again. Their only keepers are the rangers of the National Parks and National Forest Services and the workers of Biological Survey, together with state officers, wherever the herds come under state jurisdiction. The task of these men is mainly to see that the animals are left alone: to run down and capture poachers, and to poison, trap or shoot four-footed beasts of prey.

For the most part the animals are strictly on a self-help basis, and their human friends in the various national and state services keep themselves well in the background.

While the animals of our great national menagerie are scattered over a vast area in the West, from Alaska to Arizona, in national forests, in special game refuges, in the

parts of the national domain as yet unappropriated to private ownership, the national parks are in some sense the foci of information and interest about the native big game animals.

Yellowstone National Park, the largest and oldest of the national parks proper, and probably the best stocked with game, may serve as a kind of sample section of our out-of-doors, continental-size zoological park. Park Naturalist E. J. Sawyer reports the stock on hand at the present moment as follows:

Elk (including the Jackson Hole herd)	20,000
Buffalo, "tame" herd, including calves	846
Buffalo, "wild" herd, estimated.....	125
Pronghorn antelope.....	400
Mountain sheep.....	600
Mule-deer	1,850
Moose	575
Black bear.....	225
Grizzly bear.....	80

Mountain lions, wolves and coyotes were not counted, for the very good reason that the only way the rangers care to count game-killers is with .30-30 cartridges. Mountain lions and wolves are extinct in Yellowstone Park, and coyotes survive only on tolerance, because they are useful in keeping down the swarming numbers of rodents. Where they make themselves noxious, as for example on the pronghorn antelope range, it becomes a part of the winter job of the ranger force to go out against them with trap and rifle. During the present year 243 of these wild dogs of the plains were sent to join the 180 of their kindred that were killed in 1925.

The game count of Yellowstone Park is a fair sample of what may still be found in the great American West, but the proportions of the various species are not uniform all over the region. For instance, deer are not especially numerous in this park, while in Yosemite they very nearly own the place, their herds totaling about 50,000 specimens. How many deer range the wildernesses outside the national parks and forests no one knows with any accuracy, but there must be many thousands. In some places they become very serious problems, for they become quite fearless of man during the closed seasons, and leap the fences of the ranches to work havoc on stored hay and other feed.

(Just turn the page)

Greatest Menagerie

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On the other hand, the moose of the Yellowstone region, though less numerous than the deer, are practically unique. None of the other national parks has any at all, and the only national forests in which they range are those immediately adjacent to Yellowstone Park. These Yellowstone moose are rated by some naturalists as a species quite distinct from the great animals of the Canadian woods and northern New York and Maine.

As shy as the moose, but often seen nevertheless, is the pronghorn-antelope. This is because the pronghorn is naturally a creature of the open plains, instead of a denizen of the deep forests, as is the moose. The pronghorn is the one antelope-like animal that is native to America. The 400 specimens in Yellowstone are only a small sample of the herds that roam the state of Wyoming alone, totaling some 7,000. There are other large herds in other states of the West, and according to Dr. Edward W. Nelson, chief of the U. S. Biological Survey, the total

number in the country now amounts to something like 30,000. Yet these are only a remnant of the innumerable host that once ranged from western Iowa almost to the Pacific. Fortunately, strict closed seasons have been made permanent in practically all of the western states, and with the reduction of the numbers of their natural enemies the antelope are coming back.

The pronghorn's lumbering companion of the old plains days, the bison or American buffalo, fared even more hardly than did the little antelope. Except for the tiny isolated herd of about 125 animals on an out-of-the-way part of the Yellowstone Park plateau, there are probably no bison left in unfettered freedom on unfenced range in the United States.

In the United States, at least, the bison herds have to be nursed along as though they were domestic range cattle. In Yellowstone Park there is a large fenced range for them, and within it a fenced-off farm where hay is raised in large quantities. The bison feed on natural pasture until the winter drives them down from the hills, and then the buffalo keeper and his assistants supply them with hay. The summer of 1926 was drier than normal in the Yellowstone country, and the natural forage crop was therefore short. Fortunately, the hay crop, raised partly under irrigation, was fully up to normal, and the winter so far has been comparatively mild, so that unless something untoward develops, there will be no abnormal hardship among the bison there this winter.

The fare of the bison is shared by the elk and the antelope, as well as by the deer, mountain sheep, and other game animals. Indeed, in some places, as in the Teton National Forest, the Biological Survey supplies hay for the exclusive benefit of the elk. This feeding of hay is recognized, however, as at best a makeshift. What National Park Service officials are asking Congress for is a restoration of part of the original natural ranges of these animals, which have in some places been restricted by grazing permits. Money is on hand from private donations, in some instances, to repurchase these permits and return them to the government if the range is given to the game animals. It is to this end, partly, that the extensions of several of the national parks are being advocated.

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