

ZOOLOGY

# Rare South African Mammal Comes to Washington Zoo

**Aard-Vark, Only One of Kind Now Living in U. S., Had American Relatives 50 Million Years Ago**

**W**AFFLES, the Aard-Vark, has been received in Washington to live in the National Zoological Park. Director "Bill" Mann is as proud of his new charge as a father of a brand-new son, for Waffles is the only Aard-Vark now living in America, and is the third of his kind ever to have been brought to an American zoological park. The other two, one in New York and one in Philadelphia, are no longer living.

Waffles gets his name, Dr. Mann explains, because of his "waffly" nose—Dr. Mann is a devoted reader and quoter of A. A. Milne. That nose is in more than one sense Waffles' leading feature, and goes far to explain the grotesque rest of Waffle himself. Its rubbery, nervous, incessantly active tip, with a comic little tangled moustache sticking out of its end, is constantly inquisitive about everything: the edges of his cage, a keeper's proffered hand, the redolence of the polish on a visitor's shoes, the strong symphony of scents from all the other cages in the house where he lives. A truly remarkable, intensely "waffly" nose

## For Eating Insects

Waffles' "schnozzle," though astonishing rather than beautiful, is nevertheless his fortune. For the Aard-Vark is an ant-eater, and that long snout, with its nervous nose atip and a flickering sticky tongue working from underneath, plays havoc with the swarming populations of the towering termite heaps of his native veldt, after the formidable claws at the ends of his short, thick, powerful legs have breached the walls. The Aard-Vark is also a great destroyer of locusts, which are even more of a plague in his native South Africa than their cousins, the grasshoppers, are in our own West. Real ants, as distinguished from termites, do not form so large a part of his natural diet, but he eats them and practically all other kinds of insects he can find.

In captivity, Waffles' diet consists in part of milk and eggs—orthodox waffle ingredients. His third staple is Ham-

burg steak. Since Aard-Varks are poorly equipped with teeth, having only molars or "grinders" but no biting front teeth, Waffles must be supplied with pre-chewed food, to simulate as nearly as possible the small unit sizes of his natural provender. Dr. Mann states that the two former Aard-Varks in this country were also given oatmeal and hominy, as roughage.

## Not Clever

Waffles is not a particularly clever animal, but is quite inoffensive and docile, apparently likes to have his head scratched, and resists handling only as a pig might: by planting himself solidly and letting you do all the pushing. Having no front teeth, he could not bite even if he wanted to, which he apparently doesn't.

Dr. Mann acquired Waffles from a prominent German zoological dealer in Hannover. He arrived sleek and fat and unruffled; evidently they understand the care and feeding of Aard-Varks in Hannover.

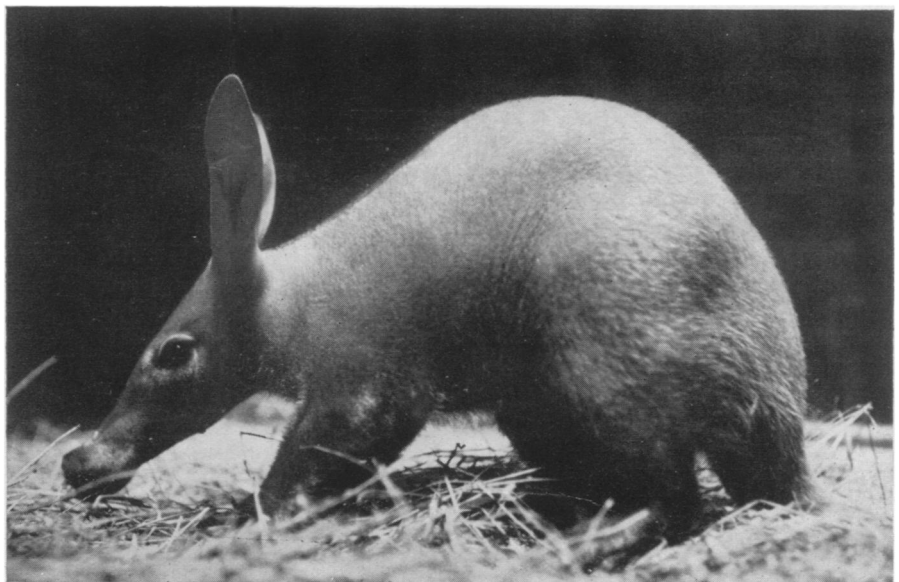
Aard-Varks were discovered by some of the earliest modern adventurers around Cape Horn; there is a description and picture of one in a famous old natural history book, the "Ortus Sanitatis," published the year before Columbus discovered America. There it was called "suillus," which is Latin for "little pig."

## Named by Dutch

They were given their odd modern name by the Boer-Dutch settlers. Aard-Vark is Dutch for "earth-pig"; but aside from being short-legged and thick-bodied the animal bears no resemblance to a pig. Indeed, if it were not for the enormous jackass-like ears, it might almost be taken as a model for an ultra-modern streamlined automobile. Its chunky body trails a tapering, thick-based fleshy tail. The whole creature is covered with a sparse growth of coarse, straight, bristly hair.

In its native state, the Aard-Vark lives in burrows, usually concealed under grass or brush. This makes it a constant menace to horsemen on the veldt. It can dig itself in so fast that a gang of men with spades have a hard time pursuing it into the ground.

Aard-Varks are now found only in Africa, particularly in South Africa, but they once had relatives in America. Two years ago, Dr. G. L. Jepsen of Princeton University described some fossil remains from Wyoming which showed by their teeth that they belonged to the same order of animals. There



**WAFFLES THE AARD-VARK**

*The Aard-Vark, familiar to most only because it is the first word in the encyclopedia, now has a living representative in the United States. The National Zoological Park at Washington, D. C., has just received one of these rare South African mammals.*

were even digestive remains found with the bones that indicated an insect diet preference on the part of these long-gone American Aard-Vark kin-beasts. But that was in the Early Eocene—

## ZOOLOGY

## Monkeys Have Tooth Troubles Just Like Human Cousins

**L**ONG-cherished assumptions that man will eventually evolve into a toothless creature because he has so many dental troubles, while his hairy cousins in the treetops always have perfect teeth, must go into the discard. Monkeys and apes have plenty of tooth ailments.

Dr. Adolph H. Schultz of the Johns Hopkins University discussed them before a joint meeting of the American Society of Mammalogists and the American Association of Physical Anthropologists in New York. His list, compiled from the examination of many hundreds of monkey and ape skulls from all over the world, might well have come from the files of a human dental clinic.

Caries or "decayed teeth" and dental abscesses are among the commonest of the ills that monkey teeth are heir to. In the series of skulls examined by Dr. Schultz, there were more cases of caries among chimpanzees and orang-utans than among gorillas, but gorillas were as liable to abscesses as were the other great apes. Some of the most fearsome-looking abscess lesions were found around the roots of the gorillas' great fang-like canine teeth; apparently these formidable jaw-armaments are not unalloyed advantages to their owners.

Lost teeth, with the gaps in the gums healed up, were very common throughout the whole primate range, Dr. Schultz found. They were, indeed, more common among some ape species than in some human races.

### Impactions Too

Dental ills do not wait for the full development of the teeth in monkeys and apes. As in afflicted man, they frequently begin with the beginnings of the teeth. Impactions, mal-occlusions, crowded jaws, the whole array of troubles that keep orthodontists busy, were all found in the Johns Hopkins scientist's series of skulls.

some fifty-odd millions of years ago.

So if Waffles wants a neighborly chat with another Aard-Vark he will have to invite one of his living relatives over from South Africa.

*Science News Letter, June 2, 1934*

The failure of the third molars, or "wisdom teeth," to erupt properly, or even to erupt at all, has been one of the most frequently cited of "proofs" that human beings are on the way to toothlessness. But even in the lower monkeys there are numerous cases of exactly the same thing. Sometimes there is congenital absence of any third molars at all, sometimes the same kind of rudimentary or imperfect "wisdom tooth" development that is found in our own jaws.

On the other side of the ledger, Dr. Schultz found in certain primate skulls with exceptionally long jaws a set of fourth molars—"super-wisdom" teeth, perhaps. But, he added, fourth molars are an occasional occurrence in human beings as well, especially among the primitive Australian savages.

It would seem, then, that another rung has been knocked out of the ladder of "inevitable" evolutionary progress which so intrigued our fathers in the days of a more naive scientific faith.

*Science News Letter, June 2, 1934*

## MEDICINE

### Regular Job is Best Tuberculosis Insurance

**T**HE WHITE plague, tuberculosis, is still a great plague, it appears from the deliberations of the National Tuberculosis Association at its annual meeting now being held in Cincinnati.

Tuberculosis kills every year 75,000 people, more than the number of Americans who died in action or of wounds in the World War, Jessamine S. Whitney, statistician of the association reported. Of all communicable diseases, including diphtheria and infantile paralysis, tuberculosis takes the greatest toll.

The disease makes its chief inroads among young women and among men in middle life. Tuberculosis is the

seventh cause of death among the general population, but among men in industry it is the second cause of death. This suggests the industrial health work needs to be intensified, according to Miss Whitney.

Yet the matter seems also to call for the attention of economists. The more highly industrialized a community, the less the tuberculosis rates, Dr. James A. Britton of Chicago said the official statistics for Chicago, St. Louis and Cincinnati showed.

"A regular job with a regular pay check is the best insurance against tuberculosis that a man has for himself and family," Dr. Britton declared.

More jobs, regular employment, apparently should be added to the points of attack on tuberculosis listed by Miss Whitney. Her list included more hospital beds for tuberculosis patients; more attention to cleanliness in streets and public places, since dried sputum is still presumably a source of infection; and greater effort to teach hygiene to special groups of the population, such as Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Indians and Mexicans' among whom tuberculosis incidence is still high.

### Industry Not to Blame

Industry, as a whole, in Dr. Britton's opinion, cannot be charged with any increase in tuberculosis. The occupation itself, as in the so-called dusty trades, may be a factor in causing some cases of the disease, however.

Dr. Britton cites in defense of industry the fact that the tuberculosis death rate is decidedly and persistently decreasing in spite of the rapid industrial development of the last few years. Official statistics from large cities show that the more highly industrialized a community the less the tuberculosis rate.

*Science News Letter, June 2, 1934*

## AGRICULTURE

### Porous Hose Useful In Crop Irrigation

**P**OROUS canvas hose stretched alongside a row of growing plants forms the basis of a cheap irrigation system recently described by O. E. Robey of Michigan State College. By varying the size and porosity of the hose, varying amounts of water can be applied.

Under the system water at 15 to 20 pounds pressure is pumped through metal pipe-lines, with the canvas offshoots serving up to 660 feet of row.

*Science News Letter, June 2, 1934*