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FAUNA OF NORTH CAROLINA.

Interesting Description of the Animal Life in this State.

Embraces Most of the Species Found in the United States.

Knowledge of the Geographic Distribution of Land Animals Important to the Farmer.

The native living things belonging to a given region are called its Fauna and Flora, the former including all animals and the latter all plants. It is the Fauna of North Carolina that will now be briefly considered.

The distribution of North American land animals has been ably discussed by Dr. J. A. Allen, in the Bulletin, of the American Museum of Natural History, of New York, Vol. 4, 1892, and also by Dr. C. Hart Merriam, of the United States Department of Agriculture, in the publications of that department.

The classification adopted by Dr. Allen, for faunal areas, is more elaborate than is necessary for use here, and therefore the division of the North American continent into primary "life zones," by Dr. Merriam, will be the system employed. They are as follows:

The Arctic zone, lying north of the northern limit of tree growth, the land of the Polar bear, Arctic fox and reindeer and the Hudsonian zone, the home of the great moose and embracing within its limits the upper part of the vast spruce forests of Labrador and crossing the continent to Alaska, are not represented in this state.

The Canadian zone takes in the northern part of New England, New Brunswick, Quebec and northern Ontario, the southern part of Newfoundland, and extends across the continent to the Valley of the Yukon, in Alaska, and in spite of our southern situation, the fauna of this zone occurs in North Carolina along the crests of the Blue Ridge and the Great Smoky mountains. The boundaries of this division with us are, of course, determined by the altitude, the lower limit being about 4,500 feet. Of animals belonging to this fauna and having a range to the far north but occurring in this state may be mentioned—the Canada lynx and the red squirrel, the "boomer" of our mountains. Among the summer birds are the Carolina snow bird, mountain solitary vireo, Blackburnian warbler, winter wren, redbreasted nuthatch, etc. It is a remarkable feature of North Carolina animal life that a stretch of country lying between the parallels 34 and 37, as this state does,

should possess among its native animals and birds species that belong naturally to a fauna characteristic of the great forests of Canada and that reaches on its northern border to beyond 60 degrees of north latitude. But to this great degree does the altitude of our mountain peaks modify their southern position. This is the region of such northern trees as the firs and spruces, forests of which cap the towering peaks of these North Carolina mountain chains.

With its upper limit coincident with the lower limit of the Canadian, we come next to the transition zone—the Alleghanian fauna of Dr. Allen. This seems to be a region in which a mingling of southern and northern forms of life is evident, although its characteristic life is sufficiently well defined to admit of its recognition as a faunal division. Among the notable animals belonging to this fauna was, in olden times, the elk or wapiti, herds of which ranged the mountain sides and valleys of the western region of the old North State. But, alas, that was long ago, and unless reintroduced and afterwards protected, they will never range those mountain sides again. Here also we find that queer animal, the star-nosed mole, which is found even to the northern limit of the Canadian zone. Among the summer birds are Wilson's thrush, yellow-throated vireo, rose-breasted grosbeak. We also find such southern species of birds as orioles, catbird, brown thrasher and such animals as common mole and cotton-tail rabbit mingling with the above. The lower limit of this fauna Mr. Brewster places at about 2,500 feet, but it must be understood that the boundaries of none of these divisions are, or can be, very sharply defined, as there is necessarily a great overlapping of species from one to the other, and this overlapping and mixing of the life belonging to one zone into that of another varies very much with individual localities. That celebrated weather prophet, the woodchuck or ground hog belongs here and is by no means uncommon in suitable localities in western North Carolina.

Next we come to the zone that covers a greater amount of the state's area than any other—namely, the Carolinian. This is not a projecting spur from more northerly zones running down into the state only by way of the mountain ranges, as were the two former, but is more especially a fauna of the Piedmont Plateau region and of the western border of the Coastal Plain region of the state. It is, as its name implies, distinctively Carolinian in its character. The opossum, the gray fox, the fox squirrel, are animals characteristic of this division, and among the birds we find such well known southern forms as Carolina wren, cardinal or red-bird, finchcatcher, mocking bird. The molly cotton-tail is a common and inextinguishable characteristic feature here, and pretty much the same might be said of our chipper and lively little bob

white—our partridge, in spite of what the "quail" hunters call him.

Beginning near the coast at the extreme northeast corner of the state, running southward and westward and gradually widening on its way down as latitude modifies altitude we find a strip of country containing life features much more tropical in character than those previously considered. This is the northern corner of the Austro-riparian or Louisianian zone. This zone includes the whole of the south Atlantic coast region, a wide expanse of country bordering the northern shores of the Gulf of Mexico and the whole of Florida with the exception of its extreme southern coast line. The alligator now begins to show himself and is plentiful and attains a large size along the southern half of our tide-water region. Several species of the smaller rodents belong to this zone, notably the cotton rat, rice-field rat and wood rat, and the marsh rabbit reaches the northern limit of his range on the coast marshes of North Carolina. The peculiar big-eared bat is found associated with the above, and the change in bird life is as noticeable as that in mammals. The chuck-will's widow takes the place of the whippoorwill and formerly this zone received added brilliance in North Carolina by the presence of the gaudy and noisy Carolina parakeet, now, unfortunately, almost confined to southern Florida. The great and rare ivory-billed woodpecker was also a former example of this life division, found on our coast at least as far north as Beaufort Harbor, but his day has also, apparently, gone by. Those interesting creatures the ground and diamond rattlesnakes also come in here, and the cotton-mouth water moccasin is their equal as an awe-inspiring Austro-riparian representative. Siren and amphiuma are two water animals quite characteristic of this zone, and their bites, like those of hundreds of other and equally totally harmless creatures, are regarded as deadly poisonous. The great brown pelican and the swift and graceful swallow-tailed kite, are both features of this division of animal life, and the black vulture, that very useful but not beautiful bird that seems equally at home in the pure ether a thousand fathoms above the earth, or in the dark and odorous interior of a dead mule, is always with us.

It is a matter of interest, although having no bearing on present day fauna, that the huge mastodon once roamed our fields and forests and the great prehistoric elephant nearly allied to the "mountainous mammoth" of the Old World, was also a North Carolinian in days gone by. So, also, were many other rare and interesting animals, now only known by their fossil remains. Loose bones of extinct whales, in some cases a good part of the entire skeleton, have been found in numerous localities, and in Halifax county some huge fragments of the skull were sufficiently entire to give

a good idea of the size of the complete animal. This whale was identified by Professor Cope and by him named *Mesoteras Kerrianus* in honor of its discoverer, Professor W. C. Kerr, late state geologist. Its length was estimated at 80 feet, the largest extinct baleen whale ever found. Another well known fossil whale lay across the bed of a creek in the same county and was used, during low water, as a footlog.

From the foregoing brief sketch it will be seen how widely varied is the character of the animal life belonging to North Carolina. As Dr. Merriam so truthfully says in his report as head of the Division of Ornithology and Mammalogy in the Year Book of the United States Department of Agriculture for 1894:

"An accurate knowledge of the areas which, by virtue of their climatic conditions, are fitted for the cultivation of particular crops is of such obvious importance to agriculture that the Division of Ornithology and Mammalogy was early led to make a special study of the geographic distribution of the land animals and plants of North America, for the boundaries inhabited by native species were believed to coincide with those suited to the production of particular kinds of fruit, grain and tubers, and for the rearing of particular breeds of domesticated animals.

"When the boundaries and life zones and areas are accurately mapped, the agriculturist need only ascertain the faunal area to which a particular crop or garden plant of limited range belongs in order to know beforehand just where it may be introduced with every prospect of success, soil and other local modifying influences being suitable; and in the case of weeds and of injurious and beneficial mammals, birds and insects, he would know what kinds were to be looked for in his immediate vicinity, and could prepare in advance for noxious species that from time to time suddenly extend their range. * * * In short a knowledge of the natural life areas of the United States and of their distinctive species and crops, would enable our farmers and fruit growers to select the products best adapted to their localities, and would help them in their battle with harmful species."

Such being the case, where, indeed, is the limit to the agricultural possibilities of a state in which the native animal life includes such widely different forms as, say, the Canada lynx, with a range almost reaching the Arctic Sea, on the one hand, and on the other, the great Florida alligator, whose center of abundance is well within the limits of tropical America, the land of the cocoanut, the lemon and the orange.—*North Carolina and Its Resources.*

"De trouble wif some men dat knows a heap," said Uncle Eben, "is dat dey hab sech a positive way o' tellin' it dat dey makes folks too mad to listed."—*Washington Star.*