

THE
NATURAL HISTORY
OF
BEASTS.

SECOND SERIES.



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THE HORSE.

Of all quadrupeds, those of the horse kind merit a distinguished place in natural history. Their beauty, strength, activity, and usefulness, all contribute to render them the principal objects of our curiosity and attention; a race of creatures in whose welfare we are peculiarly interested. To form an accurate idea of the horse, it would be necessary to see him in those wilds and extensive plains where he has been originally produced, and where, disdaining the assistance of man, he riots in all the variety of luxurious nature. In this state of happy independence, the verdure of the fields supplies his wants; his enemies of the forest are but few; and the climate, which never knows a winter, is peculiarly adapted to his constitution. In these countries the horses herd together, and may frequently be seen in droves of five or six hundred. It is a curious natural fact, that the horse has the singular property of breathing through the nostrils only, and not through the mouth; for in the severest exercise, the mouth is never seen open, unless the lower jaw be brought down violently by the force of the bit.



THE DROMEDARY.

The appellations camel and dromedary have subsisted time immemorial; they do not, however, make two distinct kinds, but are only given to a variety of the same animal. The principal, and perhaps the only sensible difference by which those two races are distinguished, consists in this, that the camel has two bunches upon his back, whereas the dromedary has but one; the latter also is neither so large nor so strong as the camel, seldom carrying more than six or seven hundred weight, while on the other hand the camel can carry a thousand. These two races, however, produce with each other, and the breed formed between them is considered the best and the most indefatigable of all the kind. Of the two varieties the dromedary is the most numerous; its habits, dispositions, and manners, resembling in nearly every case, those of the camel.

The camel is easily instructed in the methods of taking up and supporting his burden; their legs, a few days after they are produced, are bent under their belly; they are in this manner loaded, and taught to rise; their burden is every day thus increased, by insensible degrees, till the animal is capable of supporting a weight adequate to its force; the same care is taken in making them patient of hunger and thirst

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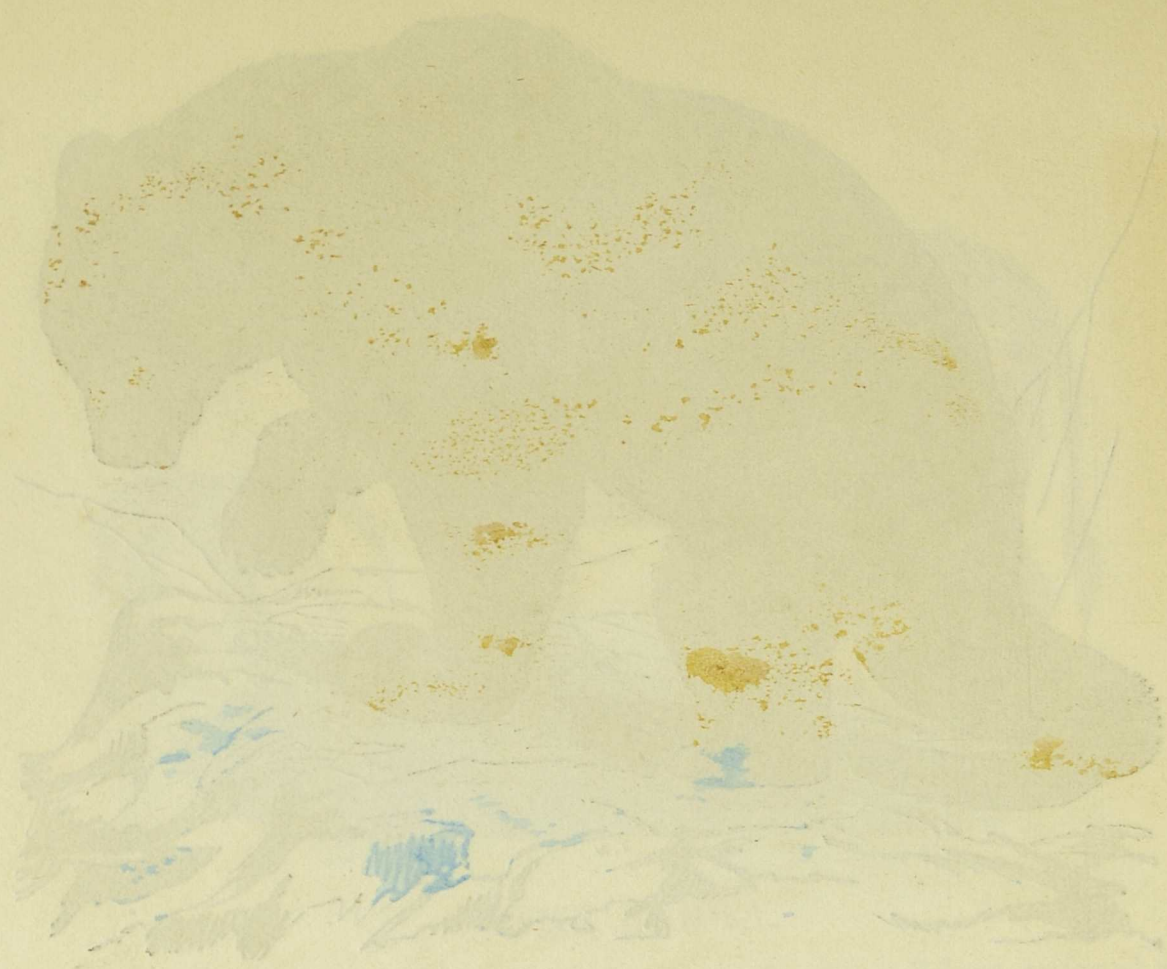
THE ZEBRA.

The zebra is the most beautiful, though the wildest animal in nature. Nothing can exceed the delicate regularity of its colours, nor the lustrous smoothness of its skin ; but on the other hand, nothing can be more timid or untameable. It is chiefly found in the southern parts of Africa, and whole herds are often seen grazing in those extensive plains that lie near the Cape of Good Hope. This animal, in shape, rather resembles the mule than the horse or the ass ; being rather less than the former, and larger than the latter. Its head is large, its back straight, its legs finely placed, and its tail tufted at the end. The zebra is adorned with stripes of brown and white, disposed over the whole body with such symmetrical exactness, that one would think Nature had employed the rule and compass to paint them. Such is the beauty of this creature, that it seems peculiarly fitted to satisfy the pleasure and pride of man, and formed to be taken into his service. Hitherto, however, it appears to have disdained servitude, and neither force nor kindness have been able to wean it from its native independence and ferocity. The female zebra, exhibited several years ago, in the royal menagerie at the Tower, would sometimes permit her keeper to mount upon her back, and would carry him a short space with tolerable docility ; but she soon became restive, and obliged him to dismount. It was sometimes extremely difficult to manage her, from the irritability of her disposition, and the great extent to which she could kick in almost every direction.



THE BEAR.

Of the bear there are three different kinds, the brown bear of the Alps, the black bear of North America, which is smaller, and the great Greenland or white bear. These, though different in their forms, are no doubt of the same original, and owe their chief variations to food and climate. They have all the same habitudes, being equally carnivorous, treacherous, and cruel. It has been said, indeed, that the black bear of America rejects animal food ; but, on the contrary, the young ones which are brought over to London, have been seen to prefer flesh to every kind of vegetable aliment.—The brown bear is properly an inhabitant of the temperate climates ; the black finds subsistence in the northern regions of Europe and America : while the great white bear takes refuge in the most icy climates, and lives where scarcely any other animal can find subsistence. The brown bear is not only savage, but solitary ; he takes refuge in the most unfrequented parts, and the most dangerous precipices of uninhabited mountains. It chooses its den in the most gloomy parts of the forest, in some cavern that has been hollowed by time, or in the hollow of some old enormous tree. There it retires alone, and passes some months of the winter without provisions, or without ever stirring abroad.



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THE DEER

With respect to elegance of form, and grace and agility of motion, the stag, and some others of the deer kind, hold in Europe, the same place as the antelope holds in other parts of the globe. The male quadrupeds of this tribe have horns which are solid and branched; they are renewed every year, and when young are clothed with a fine velvety vascular skin, which falls off when the horns have attained their full size. They are extremely active, inhabiting chiefly woods and neglected situations; and in fighting, not only make use of their horns, but stamp furiously with the fore-foot. The stag seems formed to embellish the forest, and animate the solitude of nature. He is extremely delicate in the choice of food, which consists of grass and young branches. His sense of hearing and smelling are extremely acute. The female brings forth in May or June, and in general has only one young one at a time. The roebuck is the smallest of the deer kind known in our climate, and is now almost extinct among us, except in some parts of the Highlands of Scotland. It is generally about three feet long, and about two feet high. The horns are from eight to ten inches long, upright, round, and divided into only three branches.



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THE HARE.

Of all animals of this species the hare is the largest, the most timorous, and the most persecuted. Its muscles are formed for swiftness; and its senses seem only given to direct its flight. It has very large prominent eyes, placed backwards in its head, so that it can almost see behind it as it runs. These are never wholly closed; but as the animal is continually upon the watch, it sleeps with them open. The ears are still more remarkable for their size; they are moveable, and capable of being directed to every quarter; so that the smallest sounds are readily received, and the animal's motions directed accordingly. The muscles of the body are very strong, and without fat, so that it may be said to carry no superfluous burden of flesh about it; the hinder feet are longer than the fore, which still adds to the rapidity of its motion. An animal so well formed for a life of escape, might be supposed to enjoy a state of tolerable security; but as every rapacious creature is its enemy, it very seldom lives out its natural term, which is about eight years. Dogs of all kind pursue it by instinct, and follow the hare more eagerly than any other animal.



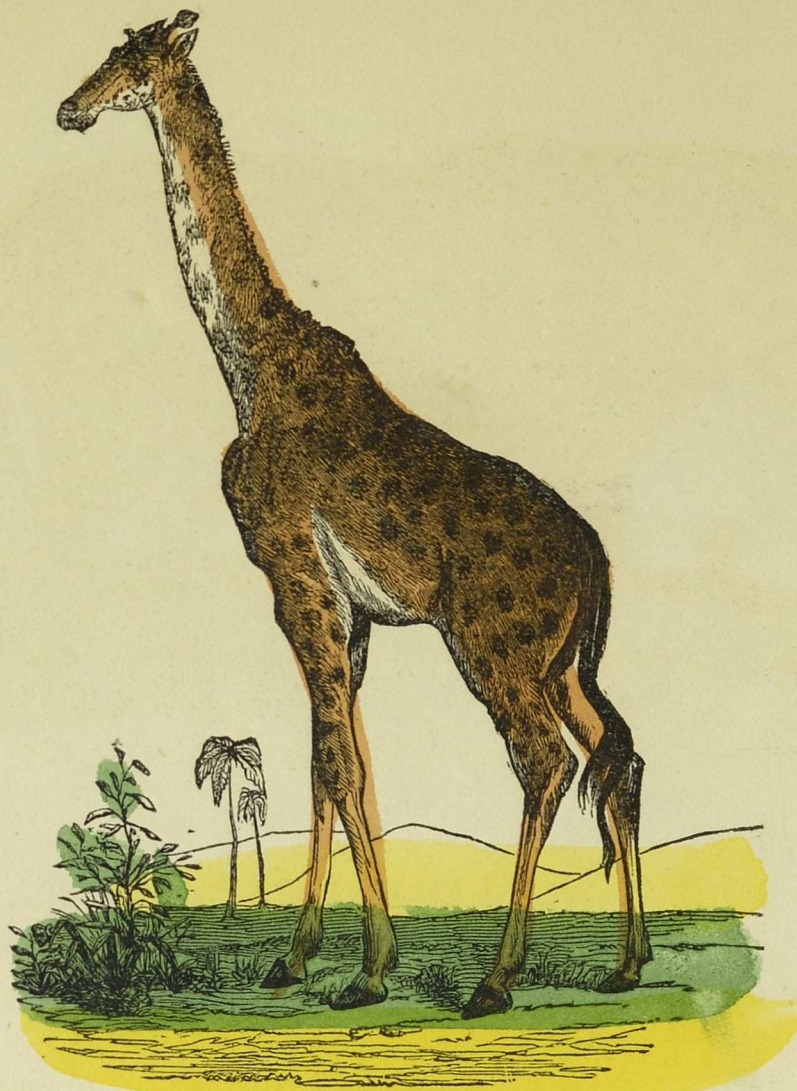
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Of all animals of this species the hare is the largest, the most limber, and the most persevering. Its muscles are formed for swiftness; and its senses seem only given to direct its flight. It has very large prominent eyes, placed backwards in its head, so that it can almost see behind it as it runs. These are never wholly closed; but as the animal is continually upon the watch, it sleeps with them open. The ears are still more remarkable for their size; they are movable, and capable of being directed to every quarter; so that the slightest sounds are readily received, and the animal's motions directed accordingly. The muscles of the body are very strong, and without fat, so that it may be said to carry no superfluous burden of flesh about it; the hinder feet are longer than the fore, which still adds to the rapidity of its motion. An animal so well formed for a life of escape, might be expected to enjoy a state of tolerable security; but as every rapacious creature is its enemy, it very seldom lives out its natural term, which is about eight years. Troops of all kind pursue it by instinct, and follow the hare more eagerly than any other animal.



THE CAMELLEOPARD.

It is no easy matter to form an adequate idea of this animal's size, and the singularity of its formation. It exhibits, in some measure, the slender shape of the deer or the camel, but is destitute of the symmetry or easy power of motion. The head bears a considerable resemblance to that of the horse, but is furnished with erect horns, about six inches long, covered with a hairy skin; these are blunt, as though cut off at the ends, and each tufted with a bush of coarse black hairs. The neck is very long, thin, and has on the ridge a short erect mane, which extends along the back, nearly to the insertion of the tail. The shoulders are very deep, which has given rise to the vulgar error that the fore-legs are longer than the hinder ones, a circumstance that proves on examination to be by no means true. They are of a mild and timid disposition; and when pursued they trot so fast that even a good horse is scarcely able to keep pace with them, and they continue their course for a long time without requiring rest. When they leap they lift the fore-legs, and then the hinder ones, in the manner of a horse whose fore-legs are tied together. These creatures have been found eighteen feet high.



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THE LEOPARD.

This animal is about four feet in length, exclusive of the tail, which commonly measures two feet and a half. It has a much more beautiful coat than the panther, the yellow being more brilliant, and the spots not disposed in rings, but circular clusters of four five spots, on which bear a considerable resemblance to the print of the animal's foot in the sand. The leopard delights in impervious forests, and spares neither man nor beast. It is a native of Senegal, Guinea, and the interior of Africa, and is sometimes found in parts of China, and among the mountains of Caucasus, from Persia to India.

The hunting leopard is an inhabitant of India and Africa; it is, like the Ounce, frequently tamed, and used in the chase of antelopes. It is carried in a small waggon, chained and hooded, lest in approaching the herd, it should be too precipitate, or not make choice of a proper animal. When first unchained, it does not immediately spring towards its prey, but winds with the utmost caution along the ground, stopping at intervals, and carefully concealing itself till a favourable opportunity offers; it then darts on the herd with astonishing swiftness, and overtakes them by the rapidity of its bounds. If, however, in its first attempt, which consists of five or six amazing leaps, it does not succeed, it looses breath; and finding itself unequal in speed, stands still for a while to recover: then giving up the point for that time, quietly returns to his keeper.

