

Dall's Sheep

More wary and agile than their close relatives the Bighorn, Dall's Sheep also have particularly keen eyesight and a highly developed sense of smell to help protect them from predators, which include lynx, wolverine, coyote, wolf, grizzly bear and golden eagle. These sheep are an important food source for

Indians and Eskimos. The diet of these impressive creatures is comprised mainly of grasses and sedges found in the mountain ranges of northwestern North America. Rings on the magnificent horns of the rams denote the age of the bearer. The horns play a significant part in the butting jousts which take place every autumn during the mating ritual.



Bison (see cover)

The bison used to roam the North American plains in vast herds but by 1880 they had almost disappeared except for a few small captive herds. In 1873 an Indian rancher in Montana saved four calves and bred so successfully from them that by 1914 he had a herd of 700. That year the Canadian government bought the herd and released it in Wainwright Buffalo National Park. Today it numbers between 40,000 and 50,000 animals.

"The trails crossed the domain of the buffalo whose numbers in the early seventies, were still legion. The open prairie was covered with their dried dung, which provided the only fuel for hundreds of miles; often, too, it was white with their bones—so many that, from a distance, it seemed as if a blizzard has covered the grass. As late as 1874, when the newly formed North West Mounted Police made their initial trek across the plains, their colonel estimated, within the range of his own vision, one million head stretching off to the horizon. And the sound of them! To the Earl of Southesk, "The deep rolling voice of the mighty multitude came grandly on the air like the booming of a distant ocean." This was a domain which few men ever saw; it could not exist for men. The railway would mark its finish."

—Pierre Berton, "The National Dream," 1970

Raccoon (see page 2)

The bold bandits of the animal world, the raccoon is primarily a nocturnal beast who hides by day in hollow trees. At ease with humans, raccoons often make their homes in cities like Toronto in chimneys which have been blocked off after the installation of central heating systems. They eat almost anything, especially garbage, and have no problem opening "raccoon-proof" dustbins and getting into the best-bound plastic bags. Many an unwary camper in the woods has awoken in the morning to find a raccoon had already consumed his breakfast. Despite their endearing appearance, especially their dark-rimmed, hung-over eyes, they are inevitably regarded as somewhat of a nuisance. Davy Crockett, of course, wore a hat made of coon, complete with tail.

"I have been often asked what my work consists of. I want to arouse in people a sense of responsibility for that north country and its inhabitants, human and animal... I have been asked where I got the power. It is not me at all. I have behind me that immense north."

—Grey Owl, the Canadian naturalist who posed as a North American Indian, and who was discovered after his death to have been born an Englishman, Archibald Belaney.