

forests, rivers, lakes, and open plains that extend from northern Alberta into the Northwest Territories. It is among the biggest game sanctuaries in the world.

Scientists of the Canadian Wildlife Service and the National Museum of Canada, who did the field and laboratory studies, believe this isolated herd - about 200 strong - to be the last survivors of the original wood-bison race in North America.

How the herd came to be discovered and the scientific values of the find are discussed in "The Survival of the Wood Bison (*bison bison Athabascae Rhoads*) in the Northwest Territories" by A.W.F. Banfield, Chief Zoologist of the National Museum, and N.S. Novakowski of the Canadian Wildlife Service, a new Natural History Paper published by the National Museum of Canada.

DESCRIPTION

The wood bison is king of his species; a towering beast that stands more than six feet, weighs over 2000 pounds, is better than twelve feet from nose to tail. The coat is darker in colour, and, all round, the animal is about 20 per cent bigger and heavier than the plains form.

This handful of giants escaped being absorbed by the vastly greater herds of plains buffalo that were moved north from Wainwright, Alberta, between 1925 and 1929, because of the remoteness of their range. Between the Nyarling River and the Lake Claire Flats and Salt Plains lies about 200 miles of lake, swamp and muskeg, country hostile to migration but favoured above all others by a second solitary species - the whooping crane. The few surviving wood bison and the fewer whooping cranes maintain their solitary range and nesting grounds virtually side by side.

Samuel Hearne was the first European to report sighting wood bison on January 9, 1772, in the Great Slave Lake area. Like later explorers he classed them all as "buffalo".

Hind (1860) and Seton (1886) were the first writers to suggest the existence of a northern race but it was Rhoads (1897) who finally described the race in scientific terms, using as his type a bull shot by Warburton Pike in 1890 - which is now in the National Museum.

COUNTING RARE SPECIES

The introduction of aerial counts as a method of estimating big game and other wildlife populations has enabled mammalogists over the years to keep track of the main park herd - now numbering about 13,000 plains and hybrid animals. In 1949 W.A. Fuller, following an aerial survey, reported the possibility of the presence of wood bison, later passed on his observations to Novakowski who succeeded him as Canadian Wildlife Biologist at Fort Smith. By 1957 these sightings were confirmed and last year a field project was set up to collect specimens for measurement.

Working with the Park Warden service, Novakowski obtained five bison. All the three adults were remarkably large, with exceptionally dark and woolly pelage. Museum records estimate that the old bull is one of the largest ever measured. The skull of the cow too was unusually big.

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GUNNERY PRIZE FOR RCAF

On September 17, the RCAF Air Division was formally presented with the famed Guynemer Trophy, symbolizing the air-gunnery championship of the NATO Air Forces in Europe. It was the third year in succession that the Canadians had taken the trophy given to the winners of the big annual International NATO Competition at this French air base near Bordeaux.

The presentation was made in a colourful ceremony at the Cazaux Air Base, and the gleaming silver trophy was handed to the RCAF team captain, Flight Lieutenant Richard W. Spencer, of Minto, New Brunswick, by General Maurice Challe, Commander of NATO's Allied Forces Central Europe. The ceremonies took place on a broad concrete tarmac, on which sleek fighter aircraft bearing the insignia of the different nations in the meet, were drawn up in formation.

In addition to presentation of the trophy, which has yet to be won by another nationality, each member of the 36-man air and ground-crew RCAF team was presented by General Challe with individual medallions.

The RCAF Air Division team had to come up with a blazing finish at the meet to pass three other squads and take the title. The Canadians, trailing in fourth place late in the meet, ended up with a 1357 point total, 100 points ahead of the second-place team from the RAF NATO-assigned forces in Germany. In third place came the RAF Fighter Command Squad with 1240 points, six points ahead of the fourth-place Belgian Air Force team.

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MOTOR ACCIDENTS

Motor-vehicle traffic accidents on Canada's streets and highways took 360 lives in July this year, a figure unchanged from July last year, according to a special statement from the Dominion Bureau of Statistics. Increases in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Manitoba and Alberta were counterbalanced by decreases in the other provinces and territories.

The July death toll by regions was: Newfoundland, 3 (5 a year ago); Prince Edward Island, nil (13); Nova Scotia, 18 (15); New Brunswick, 14 (10); Quebec, 105 (107); Ontario, 135 (124); Manitoba, 21 (15); Saskatchewan, 2 (19); Alberta, 35 (18); British Columbia, 27 (33); and the Yukon and Northwest Territories, nil (1).