

# Lewis & Clark's Missouri

## ANIMALS ALONG THE WAY & RIVER CHALLENGES

PART 5 OF A SERIES OF EIGHT NEWSPAPER IN EDUCATION FEATURES

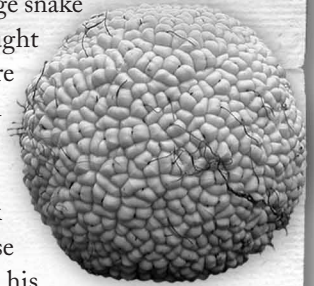
ONE TASK OF THE LEWIS AND CLARK EXPEDITION was to take note of the different plants and animals it encountered on the journey. Lewis, especially, was careful to write detailed descriptions of those that were not known to scientists in the United States. In St. Louis, he already had collected samples or specimens of the Osage Orange plant from Pierre Chouteau's yard for President Jefferson. He also sent the President a specimen of a horned toad obtained from Charles Gratiot.

All across present-day Missouri, they wrote in their journals listing many of the animals that are familiar to us today — black bear, deer, turkey, geese, beavers, raccoons and rabbits. They also saw animals that no longer roam the prairies of Missouri, such as buffalo, elk and wolves.

Not long into their journey they began to encounter animals that were unknown to scientists in the East, like the Eastern wood rat.

Sometimes the captains took time to write detailed descriptions of the new animals they encountered. On July 30, one of the men killed a badger. Clark wrote: "this animal burrows in the ground and feeds on flesh, bugs and vegetables. His shape and size is like that of a beaver, his head, mouth, etc. is like a dog's with short ears, his tail and hair like that of a ground hog ... his skin, thick and loose, his belly is

white and the hair short, a white streak from his nose to his shoulders." The expedition saw many kinds of creatures. They had even heard tales of a strange snake that gobbles like a turkey and thought they heard it one night. They were constantly watching for snakes of all kinds and had run-ins with rattlers. And the "Musquetors" proved to be a big nuisance — apparently Clark was really bothered by them because he mentions them many times in his journals.



Osage Orange

The small settlement of LaCharette, 50 river miles west of St. Charles, near present-day Marthasville, was the last white settlement the expedition would see on the Missouri. Traveling up the Missouri River against the current was hard work and required a lot of skill, strength and patience. The men were constantly on the lookout for large trees sticking out of the water, called snags, and for large logs and sometimes whole trees floating at them in the strong current. Any of these could easily damage their boats. They also weathered huge thunderstorms like we have today. The storms could capsize the boats. Huge storms broke the keelboat's mast several times.

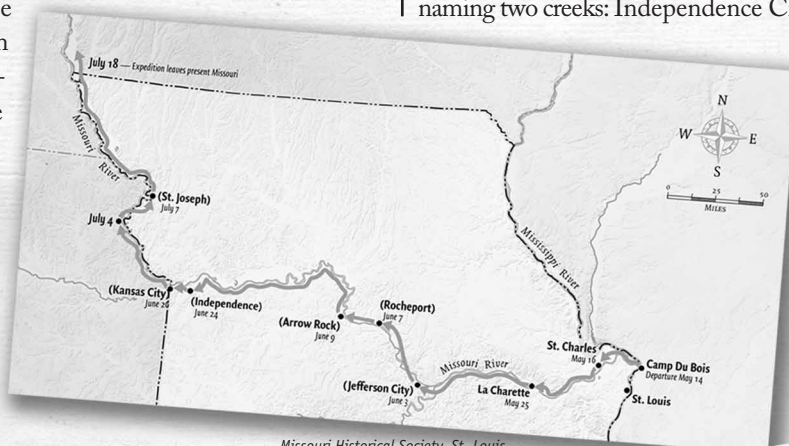
As they struggled up the Missouri, the beauty of the land unfolded around them. By July 4 they were in the area of present-day Kansas City. They celebrated the day by naming two creeks: Independence Creek and Fourth of July

Creek. John Ordway wrote that they camped in one of the most beautiful places he'd ever seen. They ended the day by firing the cannon, Americans in a new American territory.



Sketch of a Horned Toad

Courtesy of the American Philosophical Society



Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

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