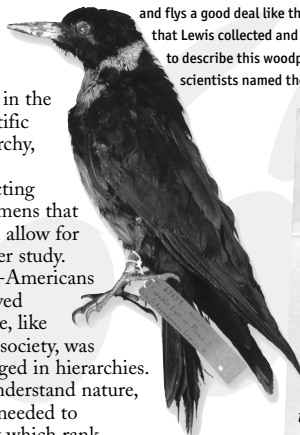


Animals

Prairie dogs, grizzly bears, coyotes, and pronghorn antelopes are all animals that Lewis and Clark had not seen before. President Jefferson was very interested in new animals that Lewis and Clark encountered, and instructed them to carefully document these animals for the scientific community back east. This meant writing exact descriptions of the animals, classifying them into their proper

place in the scientific hierarchy, and collecting specimens that could allow for further study. Euro-Americans believed nature, like their society, was arranged in hierarchies. To understand nature, they needed to know which rank each animal belonged to. To Indians, animals were beings addressed as “grandfather” or “brother.” Indians saw nature as a web of relationships, friendly or antagonistic. Indian children were taught to practice intense observation of animals, to know their habits and minds. Animals belonged to both the sacred world and the everyday world.

On July 20, 1805, Lewis wrote: “Saw a black woodpecker today about the size of the lark woodpecker as black as a crow ... it has a long tail and flies a good deal like the jay bird.” This may be the very bird that Lewis collected and sent east. Lewis was the first person to describe this woodpecker for science, and as a result, scientists named the bird for him.



Specimen of Lewis' woodpecker, 1806 — Harvard Museum of Natural History © President and Fellows of Harvard College, photo by Mark Sisan

“Near the foot of this high Nole we discovered a Village of an annamale the french Call the Prairie Dog which burrow in the grown [ground]. ... The Village of those little dogs is under the ground a considerable distance we dig under 6 feet thro rich hard clay without getting to their Lodges ... ther mouth resemble the rabbit, head longer, legs short, & toe nails long ther tail like a [ground] Squirrel which they Shake and make chattering noise ther eyes like a dog, their colour is Gray and Skin contains soft fur.”
William Clark. Sept. 7. 1804



Sketch of a mountain quail and Lewis' woodpecker, 1806 by Charles Willson Peale — American Philosophical Society

Sketches of Mtn. Quail and Lewis' Woodpecker

Charles Willson Peale, a Philadelphia artist, made sketches of animal specimens brought back by Lewis so that people could study them. This is a sketch of a mountain quail and a Lewis' woodpecker. The specimens were kept at Peale's museum. Lewis is given credit as the first person to describe both birds.

“Every animal we have has a reason for being. We are automatic scientists, I always say, because we know everything about an animal. We can tell you what it eats, when it eats, what time of the year to use the animals for medicine, what time we're allowed to use them for food, what time their fur is right. We can tell you how the animal heals itself, because we have long-time observation. We sit and we watch the animals.”

LaDonna Brave Bull Allard, Lakota (Sioux), 2002

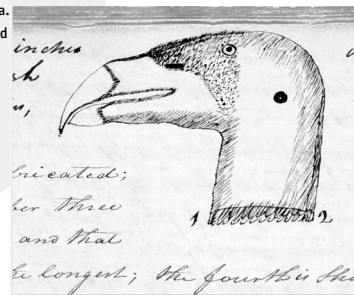
Sketch of a Condor

Though they didn't take an artist on the expedition, sometimes Lewis and Clark sketched animals they saw. Lewis, the more expert naturalist, wrote many pages in his journal describing plants and animals. This is Clark's sketch of a giant California condor, which Lewis believed to be the largest bird species in

North America.

The men measured the wingspan at 9 feet, 2 inches.

Sketch of a condor, 1806 — William Clark Papers, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis



American antelope, 1819 by Titian Ramsay Peale — American Philosophical Society

Have you ever seen one of these animals?

Lewis and Clark first thought they were a type of goat, but eventually called them antelopes. Lewis wrote: “They appear very inquisitive usually to learn what we are as we pass, and frequently accompany us at no great distance for miles, frequently halting and giving a loud whistle through their nostrils, they are a very pretty animal and astonishingly fleet and active.”



Bear effigy pipe bowl, pre-1842 — Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

Bear Effigy Pipe Bowl

Among Northern Plains Indians, no animal was hunted with more respect than the bear. The bear embodied terrible anger but also deep wisdom about curing, because bears dug for roots. The carving on this pipe probably represented the bear's role as teacher and transmitter of power. Before he had seen a grizzly, Lewis scoffed at the Indians' warning that grizzlies were strong and ferocious. He thought that because he had a gun, he wouldn't need to fear. He soon learned different. After several scary encounters with grizzlies, he began to refer to them as “gentlemen,” meaning he respected their power.

Activity

See if you can identify the animal prints on this page using the clues presented in the information.

Grizzly Bear
Prairie Dog
Antelope

ANSWER KEY: Grizzly - A, Antelope - B, Prairie Dog - C