

Peel – Soldiers, Scientists, Souvenirs and Hunters

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Mounted head of a pronghorn

Mounted head of a wapiti or American elk

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Moose

Black and white Colobus monkeys or guereza

Polar bear

Above the door from left to right

Mounted head of a pronghorn

Antilocapra Americana

From a herd at Green river, Wyoming, U.S.A., 1903

Despite shooting this antelope, Peel was concerned that the species was endangered by sheep farming. He wrote: "It is to be hoped that that great sportsman, President Roosevelt, will use his influence to delay the extinction of the prong-horned antelope, one of the most curious creatures of the brute creation."

More recently, habitat protection and hunting restrictions have seen populations return to healthy numbers.

C.V.A. Peel Collection

Mounted head of a wapiti or American elk

Cervus canadensis

Cottonwood creek, Wyoming, U.S.A.

This impressive head is from the second largest species in the deer family. Until very recently it was thought to be the same species as our red deer, but DNA analysis shows these two deer to be clearly distinct. Wapiti of the Yellowstone National Park migrate to Wyoming as winter approaches and may stay there for up to six months.

C.V.A. Peel Collection

Mounted head of a feral goat

Capra hircus

Knockie estate, near Fort Augustus, Inverness, Scotland, 1878

Feral, or wild, goats are descended from domesticated animals brought from southern Europe or Asia. They look very different from most domestic goats. However it takes only a few generations for domesticated goats to revert to their wild state. They adapt easily to living in some of the wilder parts of the British Isles if allowed.

C.V.A. Peel Collection

1 - Thomson's gazelle

Eudorcas thomsonii

Shot near lake Nakuru, Kenya,
Africa, 1904

These animals were seen on the open plains of east Africa by the Scottish geologist and explorer Joseph Thomson. On his expedition to Mount Kenya and Victoria Nyanza he collected specimens of their horns for the Natural History Museum. The species was later named for him by Albert Gunther, keeper of zoology at the museum.

C.V.A. Peel Collection

2 - Gunther's dik-dik

Madoqua guntheri

Probably from Sinnadogho, Somaliland, Africa, 1895 or 1897

Peel cruelly mocked the dik-dik as “a remarkably comical-looking animal weighing less than a hare... The extraordinary nose is soft and flabby. The use of this enormous appendage has not yet been satisfactorily explained...When I first saw this antelope its appearance made me laugh so much I could not shoot straight.”

Unfortunately for the dik-dik this didn't stop Peel 'bagging' one in the end.

C.V.A. Peel Collection

3 - Rufous rat-kangaroo

Aepyprymnus rufescens

Eastern Australia

Apart from bats, all native Australian mammals are marsupials. They form a diverse group of pouched mammals originating in South America and including the rat-kangaroo.

Although they are still relatively common, the introduction of non-native species to rat-kangaroo habitats poses a threat to their future survival. Rabbits compete for their food, while foxes take the small marsupial as a source of food.

C.V.A. Peel Collection

4 - Giant eland

Taurotragus derbianus gigas

Bahr-el-Ghazal, Sudan, Africa

The derbianus in the scientific name shows it was named for the 13th Earl of Derby whose large zoological collection later passed to Liverpool Museum.

Peel explains: "Eland meat [is] equal to the best English beef. But this assertion is made by people who have never tasted a bit of English beef in their lives. Eland meat is good but not so tasty as giraffe, hippopotamus, or buffalo."

Peel's love of unusual meats may be distasteful to a modern audience, but it shows how much public opinion has changed.

C.V.A. Peel Collection

Above the case

Moose

Alces alces

Shot near the river Tabusintac, New Brunswick, eastern Canada

Bull moose are the largest living members of the deer family. Only the bulls carry antlers which are typically palmate, or shaped like an open hand. Known as moose in North America, the same species in Europe is called the European elk. Their distribution is described as circumpolar, as they are found near both the North and South Poles.

C.V.A. Peel Collection

Above the case

Black and white Colobus monkeys or guereza

Colobus polykomos abyssinicus

Somaliland, Africa, 1895 or 1897

Charles Peel wrote of Colobus monkeys that they live “in the dense forests of North-east Africa. It is extremely difficult to see, the black looking like the foliage and the white like the sky. Frequently one can only detect the presence of these monkeys by their smell.”

This odour is caused by the monkeys’ diet of leaves and fruit. Their digestive system is similar to those of ruminants, like cattle, sheep and goats.

C.V.A. Peel Collection

Polar bear

Ursus maritimus

Franz Joseph Land, Arctic, July 1908

The Polar bear is the world's largest land carnivore. It is supremely adapted to life in the extreme climate of the Arctic region. Its white coat provides excellent camouflage and, together with a thick layer of blubber, efficient insulation. The bear's acute sense of smell means it can detect the odour of a seal's breath. Its large feet grip the ice well and help it swim.

C.V.A. Peel Collection