

Article XXXII. — A NEW CARIBOU FROM ELLESMERE LAND.

By J. A. ALLEN.

The valuable natural history material brought by the Arctic explorer, Commander R. E. Peary, U. S. N., to the American Museum of Natural History on his return from his recent long sojourn in the high North contains five specimens of Caribou taken in Ellesmere Land, Lat. 79° , in June, 1902. They comprise four flat skins of adults without skulls, and more or less defective, and the complete skin of a young fawn. In coloration they are strikingly different from any other known Caribou, being pure white except for a large dark patch on the middle and posterior part of the back.

***Rangifer pearyi*, sp. nov.**

ELLESMERE LAND CARIBOU.

Type, No. 19231 ♂ ad., Ellesmere Land, N. Lat. 79° , June 15, 1902, Commander Robert E. Peary, U. S. N.

Entire animal pure white except an oval grayish brown patch over the posterior half of the dorsal surface, gradually fading into white towards the shoulders, the hair being white to the base, or of a pale shade of lilac below the surface, where the surface color is white. The dorsal patch occupies an area of about 670 mm. in length by 350 mm. in width, and is drab-gray, divided by a very narrow median line of white. The legs and feet are wholly white; the ears are slightly tinged with gray, the hair beneath the surface being plumbeous and showing slightly at the surface. The antlers are just budding, being represented by small protuberances, about an inch and a half in length, covered with short hair. Total length of flat skin, 1660 mm. Corresponding measurement of flat skins of the dark form of Caribou from Greenland, 1820 mm.

A female (No. 19232) is similar, except that the dark dorsal area extends a little further forward at the shoulders, and is a little darker. As in the male, the patch fades out to whitish toward the shoulders. Length of the flat skin, 1560 mm.

Two other females are similarly marked, but the dorsal patch in both is much darker, approaching dark slate gray. The region around the base of the antlers and ears is clouded with grayish, as are the edges of

the ears; the front surface of the forelegs is dark grayish brown, and of the hind legs faint buffy grayish brown, increasing in amount and intensity apically from the tarsal joint to the hoofs. These skins measure respectively 1610 and 1570 mm. in total length. In one

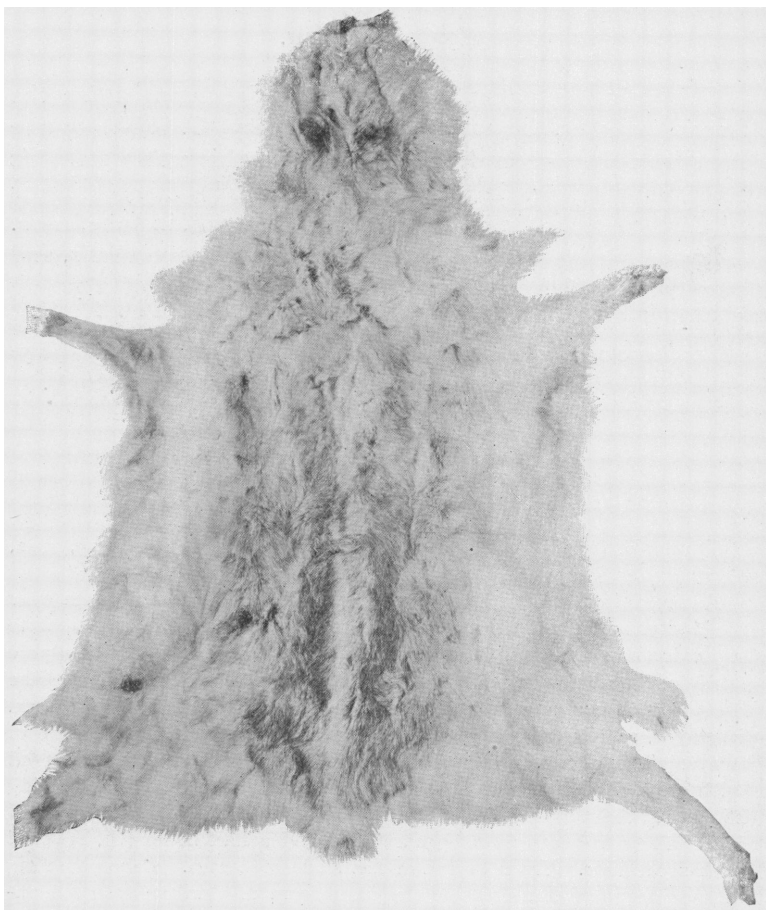


Fig. 1. *Rangifer pearyi*, male (type). No. 19231, Ellesmere Land, June 15. Almost wholly white.

the antlers form knobs an inch or two in height, covered with short hair.

A fawn (No. 19235), a few weeks old, is grayish white on the head, ears, neck, limbs, ventral surface and sides of the body, the hairs being dusky basally and broadly tipped with white, the dusky basal portion

showing through the white enough to give a general dingy effect. The top of the nose and a narrow band bordering the nostrils are blackish, passing posteriorly on the upper part of the rostrum into brownish dusky; a broad central band from the nose nearly to the ears is darker



Fig. 2. *Rangifer pearyi*, female, No. 19232, Ellesmere Land, June 15.
White except the back, which is drab-gray.

or more dingy than the sides of the face; a rusty brownish spot marks the point where the antlers are to appear, and there is a faint rusty wash on the sides of the face both before and behind the rusty antler spots. The back is marked by a strongly defined, very narrow, ferruginous line, running from the nape to the base of the tail, which, over

the middle of the back, broadens a little and darkens to deep dusky ferrugineous; the whole dorsal area, from a little behind the shoulders to the rump, is pale fawn color, darkest medially and fading out on the sides to pale buffy white. This colored area corresponds in position and outline with the dark dorsal patch of the adults. A narrow, ill-defined, dusky chestnut brown band borders the hoofs of all the feet, but is rather broader and more distinct on the hind feet than on the fore feet. The tail is wholly white to the base, as in the adults.

The adult specimens, though killed in June, are in winter coat, the hair being long, thick, and very soft, much softer and finer than in the Greenland Caribou, and the skins are also much thinner and softer. The skin of the fawn was preserved in brine, which may have slightly intensified or darkened the buffy shades of the dorsal surface.

Rangifer pearyi is evidently a very distinct insular form, very different from *R. grænlædicus* in coloration and doubtless in other features. Unfortunately only flat skins are available for examination. Specimens of *R. grænlædicus* in corresponding pelage are dark slaty brown above, this color fading gradually on the sides to the white of the ventral surface, the Greenland Caribou being very much darker in its winter pelage than the Newfoundland Caribou, which heretofore has been the whitest known form of the group.

I am indebted to Commander Peary for the following information regarding the occurrence of Caribou in Ellesmere Land. In a letter dated Philadelphia, October 13, 1902, he says: "In answer to your inquiries I will say that remains and traces of reindeer have been noted by previous explorers at the following points in Ellesmere Land and Grinnell Land: Alexandra Haven, Ellesmere Land; Rawlings Bay, Grinnell Land, and in the Fort Conger region, Grinnell Land; and an antler was picked up by a member of my party in the summer of 1901 at Erik Harbor, some twelve miles south of Cape Sabine. The published reports of Sverdrup's expedition state that he found reindeer in abundance on the west side of Ellesmere Land.

"I have seen many winter coats of the Greenland Caribou and they are pronouncedly darker than the Ellesmere specimens."