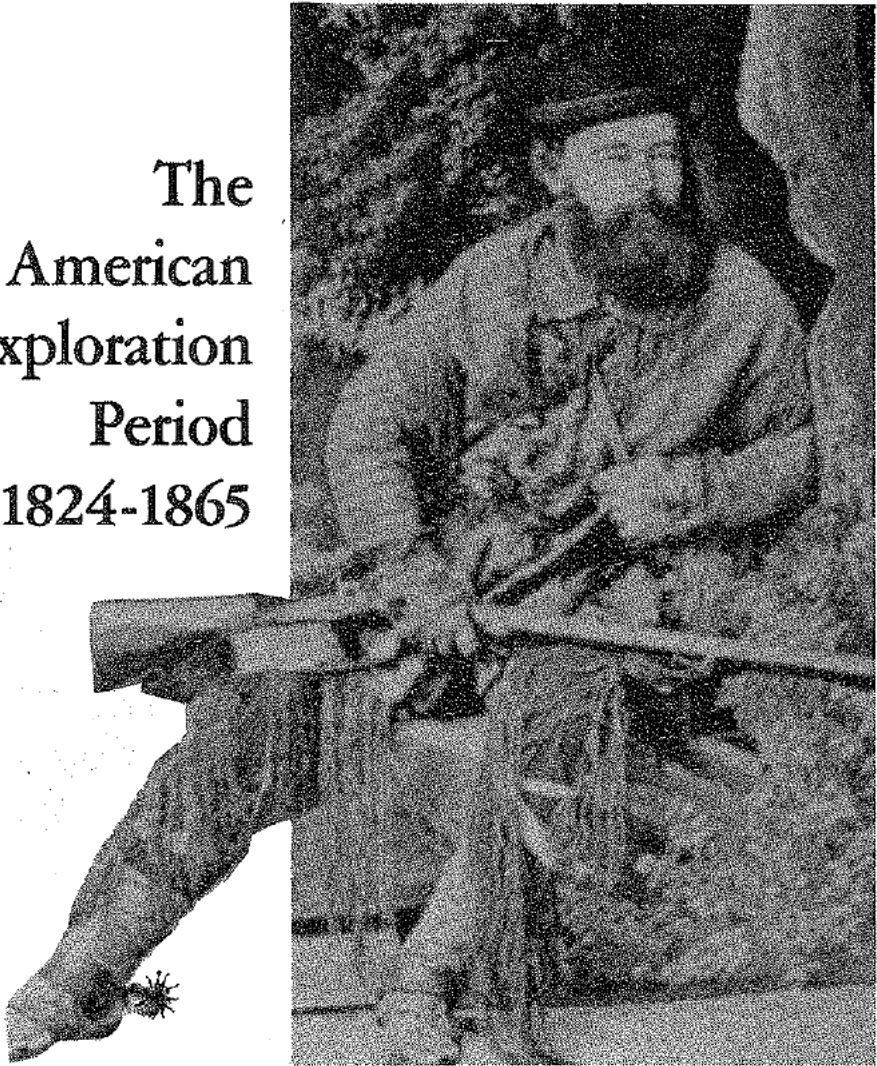


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MAN AND WILDLIFE IN ARIZONA:

The
American
Exploration
Period
1824-1865



by Goode P. Davis, Jr.
Edited by Neil B. Carmony & David E. Brown

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Here, despite Pattie's remonstrances, the trappers camped at a "Papawar" village whose inhabitants showed more evidence of treachery than the hospitality they professed. Pattie and another trapper withdrew for the night and camped some distance away. Their fears were realized; the "Papawars" massacred the entire party except for the leader who escaped, badly injured, into the darkness. He eventually stumbled into the hiding place that concealed Pattie and his companion, and the three men successfully evaded the Indians.

Incredible good fortune now befell them. The next night the three fugitives spotted the campfires of another expedition of American trappers. They were made welcome and accepted the offer to continue trapping as part of the company.

The mountain men first exacted a successful revenge on the "Papawars": they killed most of the warriors in an ambush, then burned the village. They now settled down to the routine of trapping beaver, working their way up the Salt River, which Pattie called Black River.

It [Salt River] affords as much water at this point as the Helay.

In the morning of the 1st of February, we began to ascend Black River. We found it to abound with beavers. It is a most beautiful stream, bounded on each side with high and rich bottoms. We travelled up this stream to the point where it forks in the mountains; that is to say, about 80 miles from its mouth. Here our company divided, a part ascending one fork, and a part the other. The left fork [Verde River] heads due north, and the right fork [Salt River] northeast. It was my lot to ascend the latter. It heads in mountains covered with snow, near the head of the left hand fork of the San Francisco. On the 16th, we all met again at the junction of the forks. The other division found that their fork headed in snow covered mountains, as they supposed near the waters of Red River (Pattie 1833:91).

The trappers returned to the mouth of the Salt River and Pattie briefly described the next leg of their journey:

In the vicinity of the Mohawk Mountains (where Kearny's little army saw bighorn in 1846) Antoine Leroux shot a "fine black-tailed deer." Deer and antelope were occasionally seen along the Gila, but as Bartlett (1854, 2:197) tells us, the wagons alarmed them, and the hunters had to go out well in advance of the train in order to succeed.

On June 23, a short distance below the great bend of the Gila, Bartlett described their campsite (see Fig. 9):

So thick was the wood[s], that it was found impracticable to force our wagons through. This was the most beautiful spot we had encamped in since leaving the little valley of San Isabel, in California. We pitched no tents, finding a better and more agreeable protection in the thick and over hanging willows ... (Bartlett 1854, 2:199).

Just below the Pima villages, Bartlett was amazed to find the Gila completely dry — the Indians had diverted the entire flow on to their fields. Three days later on July 3, Bartlett traveled about 15 miles north to the Salt River:

The river we found to be from 80 to 120 feet wide, from two to three feet deep, and both rapid and clear. ... The water is perfectly sweet, and neither brackish nor salt, as would be inferred from the name. We saw from the banks many fish in its clear waters, and caught several of the same species as those taken in the Gila. ... Along the immediate margin of the stream large cotton-wood trees grow (Bartlett 1854, 2:240-241).

About 12 miles above the Pimas, on July 12, 1852, Bartlett again found the Gila flowing:

The river was here much contracted, with steep banks fifteen feet high, and completely overhung with willows and cotton-woods, the latter from the opposite banks, meeting at the top. Its width was less than fifty feet, and its greatest depth did not exceed nine inches (Bartlett 1854, 2:260).

Woolsey's second expedition, in March, was described by a participant, Henry Clifton, in a two-part report in the *Arizona Miner*, published as a semi-monthly in Prescott. One hundred miners left Woolsey's ranch on the Agua Fria and struck off in three parties to raid Apache rancherias. Clifton's contingent headed east, then south. The volunteers found a stream emptying into the Agua Fria which they called Ash Creek, because of "the abundance of fine ash timber that grew on its banks." Clifton went on: "The creek at this place is some ten feet in width and crossed by innumerable beaver dams, making it quite deep. We caught some very fine fish, of the same species as are found in the ... Colorado and Gila" (Woody 1962:165).

In June a third expedition headed east across the Verde River and into Tonto Basin. On June 14 a party that included a chronicler named F. A. Cook was working its way down Tonto Creek when it came to the Salt River. Cook reported:

We made a willow drag and caught about 200 fish. The largest ones looked verry much like Cod but had no teeth, and would weigh from 10 to 20 lbs. This kind of fishing was new to many of us but was verry fine sport for we had to go into the river and in some places it was up to our necks but the weather is verry hot and the waters warm (Reeve 1949:102).

The irregulars moved up the Salt River a few miles and camped at "Grapevine Springs." In his diary entry for June 21, Cook states:

Made 4 or 5 hauls with our willow drag & caught about fifty fish all suckers, but verry sweet. I think the best I ever tasted. Perhaps it is because we have no meat for we have nothing but flour & coffee (Reeve 1949:104).

The next day Cook commented:

For the past five or six days about half our living has been fish. Our only trouble is that we have not got lines strong enoug[h] for the large fish which weigh from 10 lbs. to 40 lbs., neither can we

The most characteristic, as well as most abundant species of Squirrel, is the Tuft-eared ... [Abert squirrel] discovered by Dr. Woodhouse in the San Francisco Mountains. It is one of the largest, and certainly the very handsomest of all our North American species. Besides very beautiful and harmonious colors, it rejoices in the possession of long pointed ear-tufts, extending an inch or more from the edge of the conch of the ear, which give it a peculiarly sprightly and truly elegant appearance.

The pine-clad mountains of northern and central Arizona are the chosen home of this Squirrel; and it rarely, if ever, quits these woods for other situations. It is there a resident species, breeding in abundance, and braving the rigors of winter. Its food is chiefly pine and other seeds. ...

In addition to the preceding, a true Gray Squirrel inhabits Arizona, which I am inclined to think is a species new to science. It must be quite rare, as I never saw or obtained but a single one — a female, shot December 20, 1865, at Fort Whipple⁴.

... [the beaver] is found abundantly on all the streams of the Territory. Judging from the accounts of old trappers, its numbers seem even to have increased of late; owing, doubtless, both to the diminished value of its fur, of which so many articles now take the place, and to the Indian difficulties, which prevent the penetration of the hunter to its abodes. Particularly upon the Rio Salado [Salt River] and San Francisco [Verde River] as it is very abundant; and its dams occur, in some places, every few hundred yards. The almost unbroken seclusion of these retreats gives the animals such a sense of security, that they are less strictly nocturnal in working or

⁴This squirrel, now known as the Arizona gray squirrel, was indeed then unknown to science. Coues described the species, naming it *Sciurus arizonensis*. The squirrel is still found in the vicinity of Fort Whipple in the Bradshaw Mountains. The specimen described by Coues was not collected by him but sent to him by Willard Rice from the headwaters of the Hassayampa River shortly after Coues left the Territory (Mearns 1907:275).