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THE SO-CALLED DWARF BEAR OF OREGON.

By Stanley G. Jewett.

Since the spring of 1917 there have been current many wonderful and weird tales of a hitherto unknown species of bear, variously reported as a cross between a black bear and grizzly, or as a species dwarfed by the bleakness of the lava beds in which it chose its habitation. Again this mysterious creature was described as a "Lava Bear," and one popular writer in the Saturday Evening Post chose to call it a descendant of the Sun Bear of Asia. The writer of this paper is familiar with every nook and corner of the supposed range of this bear and has a fair acquaintance with all the birds and mammals known to the region, but he confesses to a non-acquaintance so far with any such species as this Dwarf-Lava-Sun Bear.

There are certain facts, however, that can not be disregarded by one when investigating such matters. During May, 1917, a sheep herder employed by Mr. O. T. McKendrie, while running sheep in northern Lake County, Oregon, noticed his dog barking at some animal in a juniper tree. The animal was shot, proved to be a bear, and its weight estimated at 23 pounds. Thinking he had killed a cub, the herder looked for the parents, but no other bears were found in the locality.

This small bear was skinned and turned over for mounting to Mr. Bert Campbell, a taxidermist at The Dalles, Oregon, where I examined it just after it was mounted. No notes were taken at the time but I remember the specimen as being not unlike any other bear except that its fur was rather wooly and the color a light buckskin. In size it was a cub but in general appearance it looked like an adult animal, and I remarked at the time that it looked like a runt.

Mr. McKendrie afterward took the mounted specimen to Lakeview, Oregon, where for a time it was displayed as a curiosity in A. L. Therton's drugstore. Later it was sent to Washington, D. C., where it was critically examined by Dr. C. Hart Merriam, former Chief of the Biological Survey, and an expert on the classification of North American bears, and was pronounced by him to be an immature animal that possibly was an abnormal specimen of the common black bear. While the mounted specimen was in Therton's drugstore, Mr. Guy M. Ingram of Lakeview took a photograph of it which was reproduced with a short article in the Oregon Sportsman (Vol. 5, pp. 275-276, 1917) under the title "The Little Bear Wonder of Oregon."

Since the summer of 1917 I have left no stone unturned to secure data to substantiate the statements of old-time stockmen, trappers and others regarding this unusual form, but I am unable to find that anything except the common black bear and the grizzly now or ever did inhabit this section of Oregon. The grizzly has gone never to return, but nearly every spring and summer one or more black or brown bears have been killed in the lava region. Several have been taken by Biological Survey hunters since 1917, but all have been normal black bears. Still old-timers insist that a dwarf bear lives in the lava beds. The two hunters employed in that region to rid the ranges of coyotes and bobcats have been instructed to be on the lookout and secure specimens of bears whenever possible.
