

# Ancient Fauna

Animals in Antiquity, 26.9.2019



# Sources of information

- Written sources – mainly encyclopedic accounts
- Aristotle – History of Animals (4.ce.BC)
- Strabo – Geography (1.ce.AD)
- Pliny the Elder – Natural History (1.ce.AD)
- Aelian – Characteristics of Animals (3.ce.AD)

# Images of Animals

- Paintings, sculptures, ...





# Zooarchaeology

- The most reliable – bones (origins, extinctions, distributions, movements, uses, roles)
- Verifies if existence, placement and use of animal corresponds to written sources and iconography
- New directions (DNA)



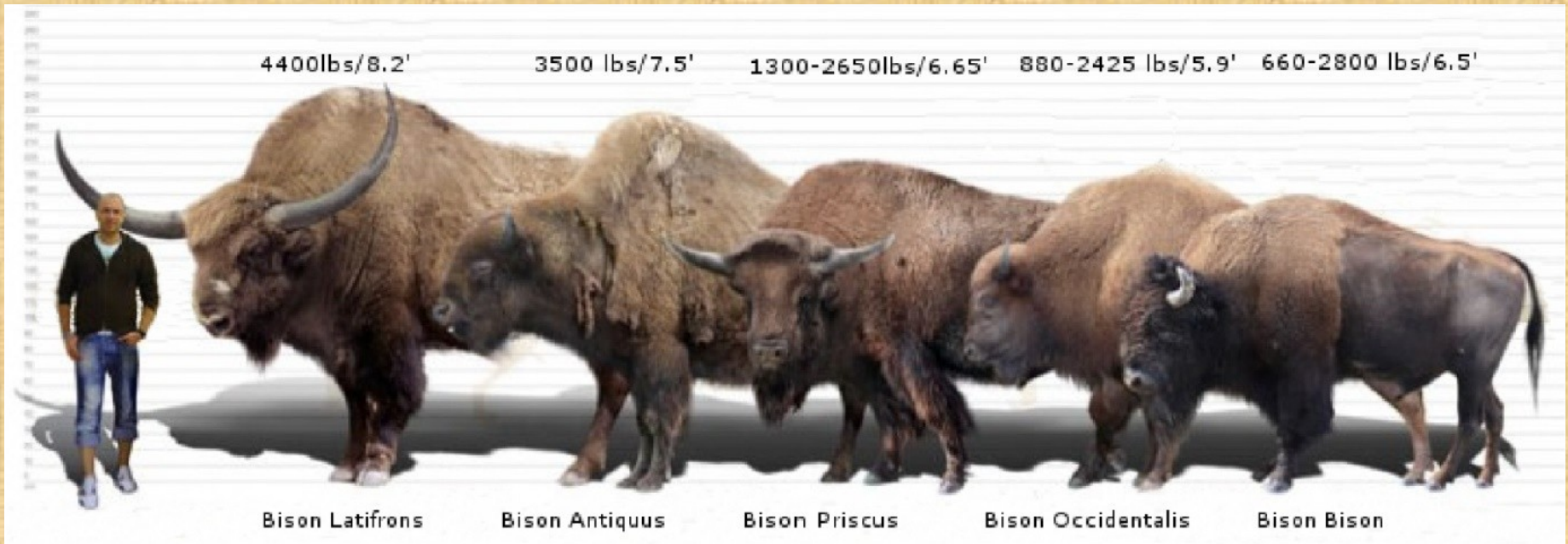
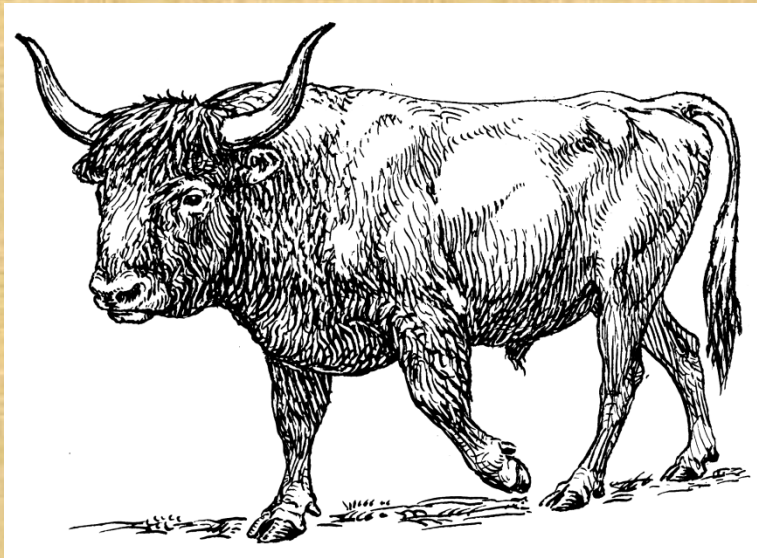
# Ancient Fauna

- Common domesticated species (major and minor taxa)
- Wild fauna



# Wild progenitors of domesticated animals

- Progenitors of domestic cattle:
- Aurochs (*Bos primigenius*) - extinct, Bison (*Bison bonasus*), Buffalo (*Bubalus bubalis*)
- Wild sheep and goats – domesticated since Neolithic times, mouflon
- Wild boar (*Sus scrofa*) – hunt, vivaria







# Marble sarcophagus with boar hunt scene (2.c.e.AD, Rome)



# Major mammalian taxa

- Deer (Red deer – *Cervus Elaphus*, Roe deer – *Capreolus capreolus*, Fallow deer – *Dama dama*)
- Hare (Brown hare – *Lepus europaeus*, African hare – *Lepus capensis*, Mountain hare – *Lepus timidus*)
- European rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*)

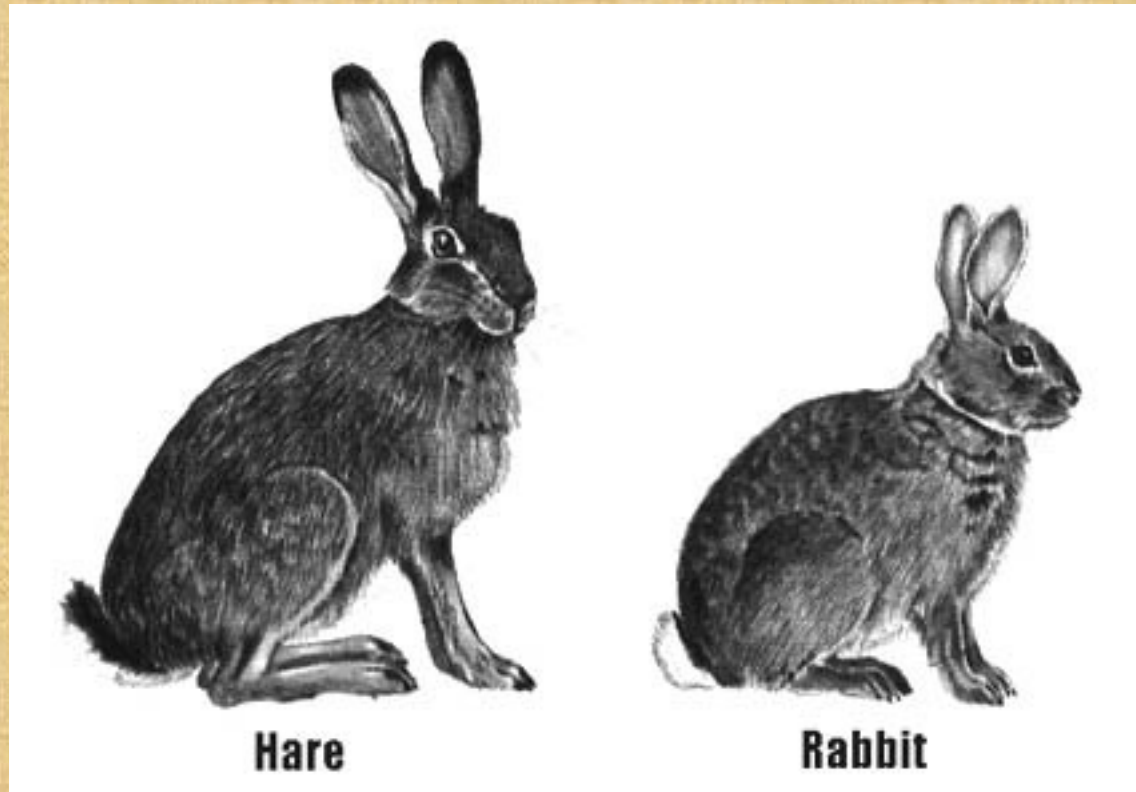
# Eros chasing deer, 4.ce.BC



# Hare and Birds (4.ce.AD, Antioch)



- What is the difference between rabbit and hare?



# Minor wild animals

- Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos*)
- Wolf (*Canis lupus*)
- Red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*)
- Wild cat (*Felis sylvestris*), Lynx (*Lynx lynx*)
- Hedgehog, Porcupine, Badger, Marten, Stoat  
Weasel, Polecat
- Beaver (*Castor fiber*)
- Bats

# Bear hunt (3.-4.ce.AD, Baiae)





# African and Asian Minor Wild Animals

- African Wild Ass (*Equus africanus*)
- Egyptian Moongoose (*Herpestes ichneumon*)
- Gazelle



# Moongoose on a leash at Beni Hassan tomb of Baqet I. (11th Dynasty)



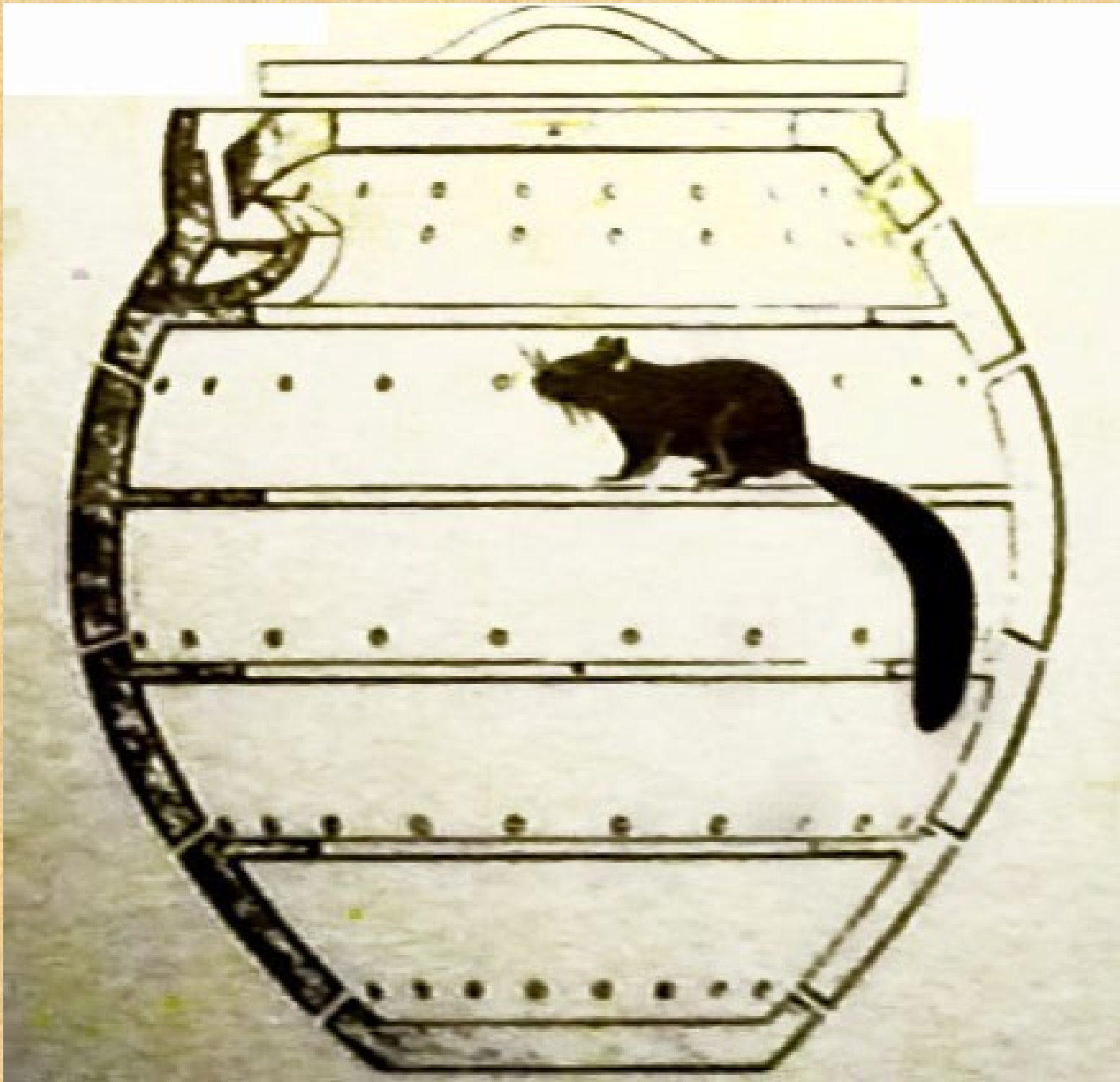
# Rats, Mice and other Microfauna

- Edible dormice
- House mice (*Mus musculus*)
- Black rat (*Rattus rattus*)



# Glirarium – fattening jar for dormice





# Mouse depicted on „Unswept floor mosaic“ from Rome, 2.ce.AD



# Birds

- Diet, hunting, sport, pets, ritual and cult, augury, magic, medicine, folklore...
- The most common taxa: fowl (pheasants, partridges, etc.), waterfowl (ducks, geese), pigeons, doves, songbirds



# Reptiles and amphibians

- Infrequently represented in ancient art and texts
- Mainly used in medicine and cult practices
- Tortoise – shell, meat



The Rod of Asclepius



The Staff of Hermes



# Lararium from House Vetti, Pompeii



# Fish and Aquatic Animals

- Whales
- Dolphins



# Pets

- Dogs
- Cats
- Birds
- Snakes
- Tamed wild animals



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vxlci1d2rOg>