



As Far as the Eye Could Reach: Accounts of Animals along the Santa Fe Trail, 1821–1880

Phyllis S. Morgan

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Travelers and traders taking the Santa Fe Trail's routes from Missouri to New Mexico wrote vivid eyewitness accounts of the diverse and abundant wildlife encountered as they crossed arid plains, high desert, and rugged mountains. Most astonishing to these observers were the incredible numbers of animals, many they had not seen before—buffalo, antelope (pronghorn), prairie dogs, roadrunners, mustangs, grizzlies, and others. They also wrote about the domesticated animals they brought with them, including oxen, mules, horses, and dogs. Their letters, diaries, and memoirs open a window onto an animal world on the plains seen by few people other than the Plains Indians who had lived there for thousands of years.

Phyllis S. Morgan has gleaned accounts from numerous primary sources and assembled them into a delightfully informative narrative. She has also explored the lives of the various species, and in this book tells about their behaviors and characteristics, the social relations within and between species, their relationships with humans, and their contributions to the environment and humankind.

With skillful prose and a keen eye for a priceless tale, Morgan reanimates the story of life on the Santa Fe Trail's well-worn routes, and its sometimes violent intersection with human life. She provides a stirring view of the land and of the animals visible "as far as the eye could reach," as more than one memoirist described. She also champions the many contributions animals made to the Trail's success and to the opening of the American West.

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