

totally Pleistocene given the long series of combinations of this species with later materials in the collections of Mercer, Hatt and others. Something went on here that is difficult to explain. [Difficult to explain, that is, in light of current theories about the extinction of the pre-Columbian horse.] If a late survival of the horse and other Pleistocene animals is postulated as an explanation of the situation, it would have to be extended almost to the beginnings of the ceramic era, which will not please the paleontologists.<sup>68</sup>

The point here is, simply, that the question of pre-Columbian horses is not closed. That's all. And it seems to us that Professor Sorenson's caution here is better grounded than Larson's certainty.<sup>69</sup>

*Tapir as "Horse."* As Professor Sorenson and others have repeatedly pointed out, the practice of naming flora and fauna is far more complicated than critics of the Book of Mormon have been willing to admit. For instance, people typically give the names of familiar animals to animals that have newly come to their attention. Think, for instance, of sea lions, sea cows, and sea horses. When the Romans, confronting the army of Pyrrhus of Epirus in 280 BC, first encountered the elephant, they called it a *Lucca bos* or "Lucanian cow." The Greeks' naming of the hippopotamus (the word means "horse of the river" or "river horse") is also a good example. (Some will recall that the hippopotamus is called a *Nilpferd*, a "Nile horse," in German.)

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68. Ibid., 255, translation by John L. Sorenson.

69. On this side issue, Sorenson claims: "Nowhere have I ever claimed that 'horses' in the sense of *Equus equus* (the horse as we know it colloquially) survived from the Pleistocene down to Book of Mormon times. My position has always been that other animals could have been termed 'horses' in the English translation of the Book of Mormon yet that perhaps a true *Equus* form survived down to 'historical' times. The FARMS Update of June 1984, 'Once More: The Horse,' ended with the appropriate qualification (penned by me) to which I still adhere: 'A careful study of the reported remains . . . ought to be done. Radiometric dating might also be worthwhile. Full references to related material will be furnished to any qualified person who desires to carry out such a study.' No such study has yet been done, regardless of the confidence with which establishment scholars may claim that late survivals were impossible. They have never examined the relevant scientific evidence." Sorenson to Peterson, 23 April 1996.

When the Spanish first arrived in Central America, the natives called their horses and donkeys *tzimin*, meaning “tapir.” The Arabs’ labeling of the turkey as an Ethiopian or Roman rooster (*dīk al-ḥabash* or *dīk rūmī*), the Conquistadors’ use of the terms *lion* and *tiger* to designate the jaguar, and the fact that several Amerindian groups called horses *deer* represent but a few more examples of a very well-attested global phenomenon. The Nephites too could easily have assigned familiar Old World names to the animals they discovered in the New.

Larson dismisses Sorenson’s suggestion that the Mesoamerican tapir may have been considered by some Book of Mormon writers to be a kind of “horse” or donkey, declaring that the tapir is much more like a pig (pp. 192–93). Here, though, it is important to remember that Sorenson was comparing the horse to the larger Mesoamerican tapir (*Tapiris bairdii*) and not one of the smaller species. It is also noteworthy that Sorenson is not the only scholar to suggest the similarity. Kamar Al-Shimas notes that in contrast to pigs, the tapir is one of the cleanest of animals.<sup>70</sup> Hans Krieg likewise feels that the comparison with the pig is unfortunate.

Whenever I saw a tapir, it reminded me of an animal similar to a *horse* or a *donkey*. The movements as well as the shape of the animal, especially the high neck with the small brush mane, even the expression on the face is much more like a horse’s than a pig’s. When watching a tapir on the alert, . . . as he picks himself up when recognizing danger, taking off in a gallop, almost nothing remains of the similarity to a pig.<sup>71</sup>

“At first glance,” note Hans Frädriich and Erich Thenius, “the tapirs’ movements also are not similar to those of their relatives, the rhinoceros and the horses. In a slow walk, they usually keep the head lowered.” When one observes them running, however, this changes:

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70. Kamar Al-Shimas, *The Mexican Southland* (Fowler, IN: Benton Review Shop, 1922), 112.

71. Hans Krieg, cited by Hans Frädriich and Erich Thenius, “Tapirs,” in *Grzimek’s Animal Life Encyclopedia*, ed. Bernhard Grzimek (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1972–75), 13:19–20, emphasis added.

In a trot, they lift their heads and move their legs in an elastic manner. The amazingly fast gallop is seen only when the animals are in flight, playing, or when they are extremely excited. The tapirs can also climb quite well, even though one would not expect this because of their bulky figure. Even steep slopes do not present obstacles. They jump vertical fences or walls, rising on their hindlegs and leaping up.<sup>72</sup>

While most species of tapir are much smaller, Baird's tapir, the Mesoamerican species native to Mexico and Guatemala, is rather large. Adult tapirs of this species are about a meter high, nearly two meters in length, and can weigh over 300 kilograms.<sup>73</sup> As one authority notes, "This is the largest of the Tapirs, *equaling a small donkey in bulk and sometimes almost so in size.*"<sup>74</sup> Likewise, A. Starker Leopold describes Baird's tapir as "the *size of a pony* but chunkier and with much shorter legs."<sup>75</sup> Ernest P. Walker describes them as "about the size of a *donkey.*"<sup>76</sup> Tapirs can also be domesticated quite easily if they are captured when young.<sup>77</sup> Young tapirs who have lost their mothers are easily tamed and will eat from a bowl. They like to be petted and will often allow children to ride on their backs.<sup>78</sup> "Ordinarily, the tapir makes no vocal sound, although when alarmed or excited it emits a sharp squeal *like that of a horse.*"<sup>79</sup> Since many authorities on animals have compared the tapirs to horses or donkeys, one cannot so easily dismiss the suggestion that Nephi and others might have as well.

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72. Ibid., 20.

73. Ibid., 18–19.

74. Ivan T. Sanderson, *Living Mammals of the World* (Garden City, NY: Hanover House, [1955]), 224, emphasis added.

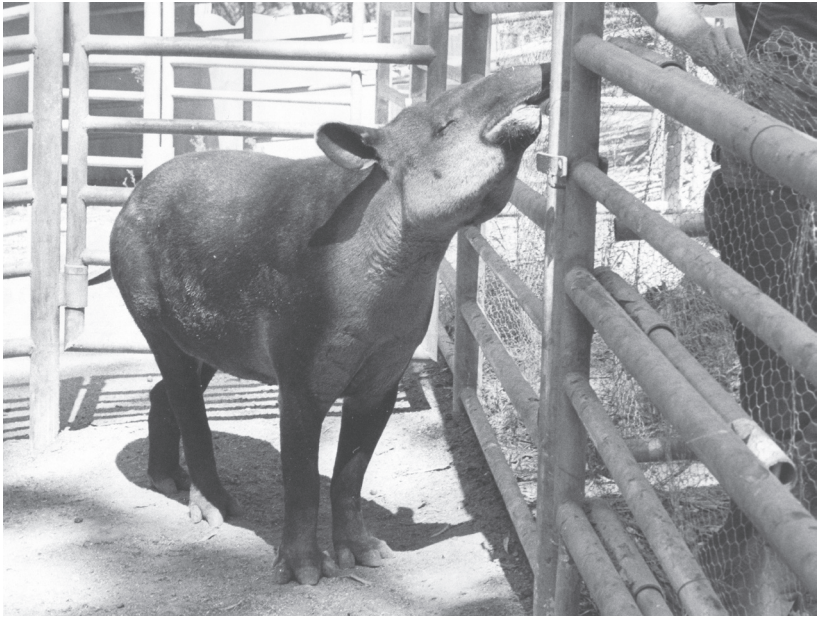
75. A. Starker Leopold, *Wildlife of Mexico: The Game Birds and Mammals* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1959), 488, emphasis added.

76. Ernest P. Walker, *Mammals of the World* (Baltimore: John Hopkins Press, 1964), 2:1347, emphasis added.

77. Al-Shimas, *Mexican Southland*, 112.

78. Frädriich and Thenius, "Tapirs," 28–29.

79. Leopold, *Wildlife of Mexico*, 491, emphasis added.



Baird's tapir at the fence. Robert A. Wilson/Tapir Preservation Fund.

## Metals

Following and expanding upon Ferguson's critique, Larson discusses the issue of metals in the Book of Mormon (pp. 195–204). The conventional view, which Larson accepts, is that metallurgy was unknown in Mesoamerica until about AD 900. In several publications, however, Sorenson has questioned the adequacy of this opinion for explaining Mesoamerican culture.<sup>80</sup>

"The reconciliation of archaeological evidence with ancient written sources," notes Miriam Balmuth, "is one of the more frustrating and, at the same time, tantalizing exercises both for the historian and

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80. John L. Sorenson, "Preclassic Metal?" *American Antiquity* 20/1 (1954): 64; Sorenson, "Indications of Early Metal in Mesoamerica," *Bulletin of the University Archaeological Society* 5 (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University, 1954): 1–15; Sorenson, "A Reconsideration of Early Metal in Mesoamerica," *Katunob* 9/1 (1976): 1–21; Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*, 278–88; Sorenson, "Metals and Metallurgy relating to the Book of Mormon Text" (FARMS paper, 1992).