

Balkan elephants

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What animal can be considered a symbol of the Greater Balkans?! First of all, one of the most frequent attributes of the region comes to mind – the one-humped camel. Of course, dromedaries in the recent past were for the inhabitants of the desert – an indispensable vehicle. They could walk great distances without drinking water, or they could drink brackish water while quenching their host's thirst and hunger with their milk. Turkmen women weave the national tablecloth, medical belt, camelina and camel milk from camel wool. In other words, the one-humped camel can be considered an everyday attribute of the Balkan landscape. But there is another symbol that few people know about. These are, oddly enough, Balkan elephants.

In 1943 and 1952, during archaeological excavations in seven kilometers from the city of Gumdag in the Hudaydag depression, in the Balkan velayat, almost an entire skull of an ancient elephant was found. When Turkmen and foreign paleontologists studied the find in detail, the data obtained allowed them to describe an endemic species of «Turkmen» elephant. Now the entire skull of an ancient elephant. it is located in the Museum of the Zoological Institute in Saint Petersburg. West of Gumdag-on Orunjik different years found elephant bones, numerous remains of other vertebrates-horse, bull, deer horn, turtles, fish, parts of the skull of a young rhinoceros. Fragments of a tooth plate with a thin enamel that belonged to an elephant of a different species. They are found in alluvial deposits of the Eastern limits of Turkmenistan to the Caspian sea The remains of one of the elephant species were also found on the Monjukli hill, which is located between Gumdag and Koturdepa in the layers of pebbles at the base of the late Apsheron deposits. Here paleontologists have found plates of

teeth of the «southern» elephant, fragments of ostrich egg shells that lived in the steppe regions. The remains of a prehistoric animal were also found on the Caspian coast, near South Akar. In the sand lay a fragment of a huge lower jaw, in which large molars, the bony remains of its owner, were firmly embedded. The animal's skull was large: the length of the preserved part – 110, width-90 centimeters.. Studies of paleontologists confirmed that the territory of Turkmenistan was inhabited. three types of elephants – in the time period from a million to 200-250 thousand years ago. Fragments of Tusk and dental plates found near lake Yaskhan, on the territory of the Bereket etrap, indicate that the «Turkmen» elephant preferred woodlands. The remains of this animal were also found on the Uzboi, where dense forests grew along the mighty river. Here, during the drilling of the well, the teeth of an elephant and a shark were extracted – clear signs of reinterpretation of these finds. Among the inhabitants of the Balkan velayat there is a fascinating legend describing the origin of these elephants. According to the assumption of residents of the city of Kumdag Gijim eje and etrap Bereket Gurbanberdy Agha, the elephants may have belonged to Alexander the great. At one time, the Macedonian king actively used them against the Persians ' war. 323 BC after the death of the famous commander, the fighting army has broken up, and elephants may end up on the territory of Western Turkmenistan. Of course, this is just a folk legend that adds color to the already unique history of the Balkan velayat. In the book «Ancient elephants of Turkmenistan», a well-known international expert on fossil fauna, a leading paleontologist of our country, Aman Nigarov confirms the presence of three varieties of fossil elephants that lived on the territory of Turkmenistan. The halls of the Turkmen State Museum contain several paleontological exhibits-a reconstruction of the skull of an ancient elephant called the Turkmen forest, fragments and the last tooth of the lower jaw of an elephant called the Khazar, as well as fragments of the enamel of the southern elephant tooth. Currently, the Turkmen State Museum carries

out an important cultural, educational and scientific mission. Organizes thematic exhibitions, photo shows, mini-vernissages, scientific and practical conferences and promotes the native history of the animal world of Turkmenistan. Edebi makalalar