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The Ancient Distribution  
of Ungulate Mammals in the  
Middle East

by

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of Ungulate Mammals in the  
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Fauna and Archaeological Sites  
in Southwest Asia and Northeast Africa

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## PART 2

# Ungulate Species of the Middle East

### Order Perissodactyla

#### Family Rhinocerotidae – Rhinoceroses

Remains of *Rhinoceros hemitoechus* have been found at several Palaeolithic sites in the Levant (e.g. HOOIJER 1961, 1966). However, all of them seem to be older than 30,000 years. Apparently no members of this family have occurred in the Middle East during the period under consideration in this book.

#### Family Equidae – Equids

At least four species of wild equids have existed in the Middle East during the Final Pleistocene and Early Holocene. These are the wild horse, *Equus ferus*, the hemione or onager, *E. hemionus*, the wild ass, *E. africanus*, and the "hydruntine", *E. hydruntinus*. A fifth species, *E. mauritanicus*, was identified by VAUFREY (1951), but it seems likely that the respective finds belong to one of the other species of equids mentioned above.

#### *Equus ferus* – Wild Horse

The wild horse is among those mammals which will probably not see the end of this century. Its last free-roaming herds in Central Asia are on the verge of extinction, succumbing in the competition for suitable habitat to the needs of domestic animals for more and more pasture land. Although kept in zoos (fig. 1), and to a certain extent genetically preserved in the domestic horse, the disappearance of the truly wild form will mark the man-made end of a once flourishing species. Not too long ago, *E. ferus* was among the most widespread and numerous animals of Eurasia.

In the Middle East, the wild horse was first reported from an archaeological site by BATE (1937) in her study of the faunal remains from the Mount Carmel caves. It was again found by HOOIJER (1961) at Ksar 'Akil and by both PERKINS (1968) and LEHMANN (1970) at Yabroud. The species was not mentioned in the original report on the faunal remains from Shuqba, but among the finds held at the Department of Palaeontology of the British Museum (Natural History) there are cheekteeth which resemble *E. ferus* more than *E. hemionus*, to which they have been ascribed originally. Further horse remains are known from Kebarah (DAVIS 1980a).

The southernmost finds of *Equus ferus* come from Mdamagh rock shelter near Petra in southern Jordan. True horses were not mentioned by PERKINS (1966) in his report on the faunal remains excavated at this site by D. Kirkbride. However, two lower cheek teeth found at