

Today we passed on the starboard side the remains of a vast many mangled carcasses of buffalo which had been driven over a precipice of 120 feet by the Indians and perished. The water appeared to have washed away a part of this immense pile of slaughter, and still there remained the fragments of at least a hundred carcasses. They created a most horrid stench.

In this manner the Indians of the Missouri destroy vast herds of buffalo at a stroke: For this purpose, one of the most active and fleet young men is selected and disguised in a robe of buffalo skin, having also the skin of the buffalo's head with the ears and horns fastened on his head in the form of a cap. Thus caparisoned, he places himself at a convenient distance between a herd of buffalo and a precipice proper for that purpose, which happens in many places on this river for miles together. The other Indians now surround the herd on the back and flanks. At a signal agreed on, all show themselves at the same time, moving forward towards the buffalo.

The disguised Indian or decoy has taken care to place himself sufficiently nigh the buffalo to be noticed by them when they take to flight. Running before them, the buffalo follow him in full speed to the precipice. The cattle behind driving those in front over and seeing them go, do not look or hesitate about following until the whole are precipitated down the precipice, forming one common mass of dead and mangled carcasses. The decoy, in the mean time, has taken care to secure himself in some cranny or crevice of the cliff which he had previously prepared for that purpose. The part of the decoy, I am informed, is extremely dangerous. If they are not very fleet runners, the buffalo tread them under foot and crush them to death, and sometimes drive them over the precipice also, where they perish with the buffalo.

Just above this place we came to for dinner, opposite the entrance of a bold running river, 40 yards wide, which falls in on the larboard side. This stream we call the Slaughter River.

*Lewis, May 29, 1805*

Great numbers of wolves were about this place and very gentle. I killed one of them with my spear.

*Clark, May 29, 1805*

The Slaughter River, now called Arrow Creek, flows into the Missouri at the left of this photo. The Indians drove the herds of buffalo over the cliff on the right.

May 29, 1805, mile 2439

