

are flat, and resemble those of man. His feet are strong, and adapted for digging. The metatarsal bones are long; and he has five toes on all his feet. His tail is long, and tapers to a point. His body is oblong, and has a great resemblance to that of a large rat. He is covered with brown hairs, some of which are longer than others. This animal appears to be a small species of martin or polecat. Linnæus imagined, that the black weasel of Brasil might be the *galera* of Mr. Brown; and, indeed, the two descriptions afford some reason for the conjecture\*. Besides, this black weasel of Brasil is likewise found in Guiana, where it is called *tayra*†; and I suspect that the word *galera* is a

\* *Musella atra collo subtus macula alba triloba. Habitat in Brasilia. . . . Holmæ. Capf. Brown, Jern. 485. tab. 49. fig. 1. Galera, statura martis, at nigra, pilis rigidioribus, auriculæ rotundæ villosæ. Area ante oculos chærensens, macule sub medio collo non vero sub gula. Mammæ posse umbilicam quatuor. — Nera, Mr. Brown says, that he saw only two pups on the lower part of the belly; but the other two might escape his observation. He also says, that the *galera* is found in Guiney, and the black weasel in Brasil. But this assertion ought not to stumble us; for it happens daily, that Brazilian animals are first transported to Guiney, and afterwards pass for animals belonging to that country; and vice versa. I agree, therefore, with Linnæus, in thinking that the *galera* of Mr. Brown is the same animal with the black weasel of Brasil.*

† *Musella maxima atra, muschum redolens. Tayra. Groffe belette. This animal, by rubbing itself against trees, leaves a kind of unctuous humour which has a strong odour of musk; Barrière, Franc. Equin. p. 155.*

corruption

corruption derived from *tayra*, which is the true name of this animal.

## XVI.

### THE MERIAN OPOSSUM\*.

THIS animal is a native of the same climate, and belongs to a neighbouring species with the other opossums. Sibilla Merian is the first writer that has given a figure and a short ac-

\* Merian opossum, with long, sharp pointed, naked ears; head, and upper part of the body, of a yellowish brown colour; the belly white tinged with yellow; the fore feet divided into five fingers; the hinder into four and a thumb, each furnished with flat nails; tail very long, slender, and, except at the base, quite naked; Pennant's *Synops. of Quad.* p. 210.

Dezack; *Merian. Insect. Surinam*, p. 66. tab. 66. — Merian is the name of a German painteress, who first discovered this species at Surinam.

Mus sylvestris Americanus; *Sel. Mus. tun. i. p. 49. tab. 31. fig. 5.*

Philander ex rufo helvus in dorso, in ventre ex flavo albicans; *Brisson. Quad.* p. 212.

Mus sylvestris Americanus, catulos in dorso gerens; *Klein. Quad.* p. 58.

Didelphis dorsifera, cauda basi pilosa, corpore longiore, digitis manuum muticis; *Linn. Syst. Nat.* p. 72.

Le Philandre de Surinam; *Buffon.*

count of it \*. Seba afterwards gave Merian's figure for the female, and added a new figure for the male, with a kind of description. This animal, says he, has very brilliant eyes, which are surrounded with a circle of deep brown hair. The body is covered with soft hair, or rather wool of a reddish yellow colour, but of a bright red on the back. The front, muzzle, belly, and feet, are whitish yellow. The ears are naked, and pretty hard. On the upper lip, and also above the eyes, there are long hairs in the form of whiskers. Its teeth, like those of the dormouse, are very sharp. Upon the tail of the male, which is naked, and of a pale red colour, there are dusky red spots, which appear not on the tail of the female. The feet resemble the hands of an ape; those before have four toes, and the thumb garnished with short, blunt nails; but on the hind feet the thumb alone has a flat, blunt nail, the other four toes being armed with small sharp claws. The young of these animals grunt nearly in the same manner as a pig. The pups of the female resemble those of the murine opossum. Seba properly remarks, that, in the

\* Hic genus gliris sylvestris depictum est, qui catulos quatuor vulgo quinque vel sex una fœtura emittit in dorso secum portat; ex flavo fœci coloris, at subocula ejus alba est: Cum antra exeunt alimenti causa, a catulis circum currunt, qui jam saturi vel molestias suspicientes, illico matris dorsum ascendunt, et caudas suas parentem caudis involvunt, qui illos statim in antra apportant; *Mar. Sicil. Merian. Inst. M. Surinam. p. 66. fig. tab. 66.*

figure given by Merian, the feet and toes are ill represented \*. The females produce five or six at a litter. The tail is very long, and prehensile, like that of the sapajous. The young mount upon the back of the mother, and adhere firmly with their tails twisted round hers. In this situation she carries them about with great nimbleness and security.

## XVII.

## THE AKOUCHI, or OLIVE CAVY.

THE akouchi is pretty common in Guiana and other parts of South America. It differs from the agouti by having a tail, which is wanting in the agouti. The akouchi is generally smaller than the agouti, and its hair is not red, but of an olive colour †.

These are the only differences we know between the akouchi and agouti, which, however, seem to be sufficient to constitute two distinct species.

\* Seba, vol. i. p. 47. tab. 21. fig. 4.

† Cuniculus minor, caudatus, olivaceus; *Akouchi, Barriès, Hist. Nat. de la Fr. Equin. p. 153.*