

## THE MOLE\*.

THE mole, though not blind, has eyes so small, and so covered, that it can have little benefit from the sense of seeing. Nature, by way of recompense, has bestowed on it a profuse

\* The mole has a long nose and snout; the upper jaw much longer than the under, no external ears, fore-feet very broad, with scarce any apparent legs before, and hind-feet very small. It has very minute eyes, hid in the fur, six cutting teeth in the upper, eight in the lower jaw, and two canine in each. The fore-part of the body is thick and muscular, and the hind-part taper; the fore-feet are placed obliquely, and resemble hands, with five toes, each terminated by strong claws. The hind-feet are very small, with five toes to each. The tail is short, and the skin very tough, so as scarce to be cut through. The hair, which is short, close set, and softer than the finest velvet, is usually black, sometimes spotted with white, and sometimes quite white. The length of the body is five and three fourth inches, and that of the tail one; Pennant's *Synops. of Zood.* p. 311.

In Greek, *Αρδαλ*; in Latin, *Talpa*; in Italian, *Talpa*; in Spanish, *Tapa*; in German, *Mohrwerk*, *Mohrwerk*; in Swedish, *Mullvad*; in Polish, *Kret*; in French, *La Taupe*;

*Σκαλα* Galeat.

*Talpa*; Gesner, *Zood.* p. 931. Icon. *Zood.* p. 116. Ray, *Synops. Zood.* p. 236.

*Talpa Europæa*, caudata, pedibus pentadactylis: Linn. *Syst.* p. 73.

*Talpa nostras*, nigra communiter; Klein. *Zood.* p. 60.

*Talpa caudata*, nigricans, pedibus amicis et posticis pentadactylis. *Talpa vulgaris*; Brisson. *Regn. Anim.* p. 280.

portion of the sixth sense, remarkable vessels and reservoirs \*, a prodigious quantity of seminal fluid, enormous testicles, a penis of immoderate length; and all these parts are concealed within the body, which must render them more hot and active. Of all animals the mole is most amply endowed with generative organs, and consequently with their relative sensations. It has, besides, a delicate sense of touch; a skin as soft as velvet; a very fine ear, and small hands, with five fingers, very different from the extremities of other quadrupeds, and nearly similar to the human hand; great strength in proportion to the size of its body; a compact skin; and a perpetual vigour. So lively and reciprocal an attachment subsists between the male and female, that they seem to dread or disrelish all other society. They enjoy the placid habits of repose and of solitude, the art of securing themselves from disquiet and injury, of instantaneously making an asylum or habitation, of extending its dimensions, and of finding a plentiful subsistence, without the necessity of going abroad. These are the manners, the dispositions, and the talents of the mole; and they are unquestionably preferable to talents

\* Testes maximos, parastatos amplissimos, novum corpus feminale ab his diversum ac separatum—penem etiam facile omnium, ni fallor, animalium longissimum; ex quibus colligere est, maximam præ reliquis omnibus animalibus voluptatem in coite, hoc abjectum et vile animalculum percipere, ut habeant quod ipsi invidiant qui in hoc supremas vitæ suæ delicias colligunt; *Ray, Synops. Animal. Quad. p. 239.*

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more brilliant and more incompatible with happiness, than the most profound obscurity.

The mole shuts up the entrance of her retreat, and seldom leaves it, unless compelled by the admission of water, or when its mansion is demolished by art. She makes a round vault in the meadows, and generally a long trench in the gardens; because it is easier to remove cultivated ground, than a turf rendered compact and solid by the roots of herbs. She continues not long in miry nor in hard stony ground, but delights in a soft earth, stored with esculent roots, and well peopled with insects and worms, which constitute her chief nourishment.

As the moles seldom leave their subterranean abodes, they have few enemies, and easily elude the carnivorous animals. The overflowing of rivers is their greatest scourge: During inundations, they are seen swimming in vast numbers, and using every effort to gain the more elevated grounds; but most of them perish, as well as their young, who remain in their holes. Without this devastation, the great talents they have for multiplying would render them extremely incommodious to man. They couple about the end of winter, and go but a short time with young; for we find them very small in the month of May. They generally bring forth four or five at a time; and it is easy to distinguish the hillocks under which they litter; for they are larger, and made with more art than the common kind. I believe these

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animals

animals bring forth more than once a year; but of this I cannot be certain: It is a fact, however, that we meet with young ones from April to August. Perhaps some of them may be later in coupling than others.

The habitation where they deposit their young merits a particular description; because it is constructed with singular intelligence. They begin with raising the earth, and forming a pretty high arch. They leave partitions, or a kind of pillars at certain distances, beat and press the earth, interweave it with the roots of plants, and render it so hard and solid, that the water cannot penetrate the vault, on account of its convexity and firmness. They then elevate a little hillock below, upon the top of which they lay herbs and leaves, for a bed to their young. In this situation, they are above the level of the ground, and consequently out of the reach of ordinary inundations, and are, at the same time, defended from the rains by the large vault that covers the internal one, upon the convexity of which they rest, along with their young. This internal hillock, or vault, is pierced on all sides with sloping holes, which descend still lower, and serve as subterraneous passages for the mother to go in quest of food for herself and her offspring. These by-paths are firm and beaten, extend about twelve or fifteen paces, and issue from the mansion like rays from a centre. We likewise find, under the superior vault, the remains of the roots of the *colchicum*, or meadow

meadow saffron, which seem to be the first food given to the young. From this description it is apparent, that the mole never comes out but at a considerable distance from her habitation, and that the most simple and most certain method of taking both the old and the young, is to make a round trench, which will cut off all the communicating passages. But, as the mole, upon the smallest noise, flies, and endeavours to carry off her young, it will be necessary to employ three or four men with spades to raise the hillock at once, or to make a trench almost instantaneously, and then to seize them, or to watch them as they attempt to escape.

It has been foolishly asserted by some writers\*, that the mole and badger sleep during the whole winter, without taking any food. The badger, as we formerly remarked†, comes out of his hole in winter, as well as in summer, in quest of provisions; and it is easy to be ascertained of this fact, by the tracks he leaves upon the snow. The mole sleeps so little in winter, that she raises the earth in the same manner as she does in summer; and the country people remark, that *a thaw approaches, because the moles make hills*. They are, indeed, fond of warm places; and they are often caught by the gardeners in the months of December, January, and February.

\* *Ursus, Moler, Erinaceus, Talpa, Vespertilio per hyemem dormiunt abstemii*; *Linn. Faun. Suec. p. 8*.

† See the article Badger.

The mole frequents cultivated countries only. There are none in the dry deserts, nor in the cold climates, where the earth is frozen during the greatest part of the year. The animal called the Siberian mole \*, with green and yellow hair, is a different species from our mole, which abounds only from Sweden † to Barbary ‡; for, from the silence of travellers, it is presumeable, that they exist not in hot climates. Those of America are likewise different: The Virginian mole §, however, has a great resemblance to ours, except in the colour of the hair, which is mixed with a deep purple. But the red mole of America is a different animal ||. There are only two or three varieties in our common moles; we find them more or less brown or black; and we have seen them entirely white. Seba describes and gives a figure of a black and white mole, which was found in East-Friesland, and was somewhat larger than our mole ¶.

\* Albert Seba, vol. i. p. 5.

† Linn. Faun. Suec. p. 7.

‡ Shaw's Travels.

§ Albert Seba, vol. i. p. 5.

|| Id. ibid.

¶ This mole was found on the high-way. It is longer than the common mole, from which it differs in the colour of the skin only, which is variegated on the back and belly with black and white spots, together with a mixture of gray hair as fine as silk. The muzzle of this animal is long, and garnished with long bristly hair. The eyes are so small, that it is difficult to discover them; *Albert Seba*, vol. i. p. 68.

Plate XC.  
MOLE.



MOLE.  
*deprived of its skin.*

Plate XCI.



MOLE of the CAVE of GOOD HOPE.

## SUPPLEMENT.

PONTOPPIDAN assures us, that the mole exists not in Norway, because that country is too rocky to afford it proper accommodation.

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The MOLE of the Cape of Good Hope.

I Have here given a figure of a mole found at the Cape of Good Hope, a stuffed skin of which was sent me by M. Sonnerat. This mole pretty much resembles the common species in the form of its body, in the eyes, in the ears, and in the tail; but it differs in the head, which is larger, and in the muzzle, which resembles that of a Guiney-pig. The fore-feet are likewise different: The hair is not black, but dark brown, with a little yellow at the extremity of each hair. The tail is covered with large hairs of a yellowish white colour; and, in general, the hair of this mole is longer than that of the European. From all these descriptions we may conclude, that it is a particular species, and that, though allied to the common mole, it cannot be regarded as a simple variety,