

## The COENDOU, or BRASILIAN PORCUPINE\*.

IN every article we have treated of, there are more errors to detect than truths to relate. The source of these errors is to be derived from this circumstance, that, of late, the history of animals

\* The Brazilian Porcupine has a short blunt nose, and long white whiskers. Beneath the nose is a bed of small spines. The top of the head, back, sides, and base of the tail, are covered with spines. The longest on the lower part of the back and tail are three inches in length, very sharp, white, and barred near their points with black. They adhere closely to the skin, which is quite naked between them. They are shorter and weaker as they approach the belly; and, on the breast, belly, and lower part of the legs, they are converted into dark brown bristles. The feet are divided into four toes, and the claws are very long. On the place of the thumb, there is a great protuberance. The tail is eighteen inches long, slender, and taper towards the end; the last ten inches of it is almost naked, having only a few hairs on it, and has, for that length, a strong prehensile quality; Pennant's *Synops. Quad.* p. 264.

*Coendou*; the name of this animal in Guiana;

*Coendou*; *Missen da P. d'Alberville au Maragou,* p. 247.

Moitracacatain, seu thacatain, spinosa hylicre Nova Hispania; *Hernandez, Hist. Mex.* p. 322. *Nieremberg,* p. 154.

Ourico caheiro, *Marsgrav. Brasil.* p. 233. *Pijn, Brasil.* p. 79. 325.

*Hylix Americanus*; *Rail Synops.* p. 208.

*Hylix* prehensilis, pedibus tetradactylis, cauda elongata, prehensilis, feminauda; *Linn. Syst. Nat.* p. 76.

*Hylix*

Plate CCVIII.



*Hylix, kulp!*

PORCUPINE.



PORCUPINE.

Plate CCIX.



*A. Bell & Co. del.*

PORCUPINE.

animals has been solely composed by men who are prejudiced with methodical arrangements, and who mistake their trifling systems for the genuine registers of Nature. No animals belonging to the warm climates of the Old Continent exist in America; neither are any of the South American animals to be found under the Torrid Zone of Africa and Asia. The porcupine, as formerly remarked, is an original inhabitant of the warm countries of the Old World; and, having never been found in the New, his name has been transferred to such animals as resembled him, and particularly that now under consideration. On the other hand, the coendou of America has been transported to the East Indies; and Piso, who probably knew not the porcupine, made Bontius\*, who treats only of animals belonging to the south of Asia, engrave the American coendou under the name of the true porcupine; so that, at first sight, we would be tempted to think that this animal existed equally in America and in Asia. With a little attention, however, it is easy to perceive, that Piso, who, in this article, as well as in most parts of his work, is but the plagiarist of Marcgrave, has not

*Hystrix cauda longissima, tenui, medietate extrema aculeorum  
experte; Brisson. 2<sup>nd</sup>. p. 87.*

*Hystrix longius caudatus, brevioribus aculeis; Barriére, Franc.  
Egale. p. 153.*

*Coandou, Brasiliensis, Lysianis.*

*Chat épineux; Desmarchais, tom. III. p. 303.*

\* Jac. Bontii, Hist. Indis Orient. p. 54.

only

only copied Maregrave's figure of the coendou into his history of Brasil, but likewise engraved it again for Bontius's work, which he digested and published. Hence, though we have the figure of the coendou in Bontius, we must not conclude that it exists in Java, or in any other part of the East Indies, nor take this figure for that of the porcupine, between which and the coendou there is no similarity, except that both have quills or spines.

It is to Ximenes, and afterwards to Hernandez, that we owe our first knowledge of this animal, which they have pointed out under the Mexican name of *Hoitztlacuatzin*: The *tlacuatzin* is the opossum; and *hoitztlacuatzin* should be translated the *bristly* or *spinous opossum*. This denomination has been ill applied; for these animals have very little resemblance. Maregrave has not adopted this Mexican name, but calls the animal by its Brazilian name, *cuandu*. Maregrave, however, ought to have perceived, that his Brazilian *cuandu* was the same animal with the *hoitztlacuatzin* of Mexico, especially as his figure and description correspond very well with those of Hernandez; and as Lact, the editor and commentator of Maregrave, says, in express terms\*, that the spinous *tlacuatzin* of Ximenes,

\* Videtur esse idem animal aut saltem simile quod Fr. Ximenis describit sub nomine Tlacuatzin spinosa. De Lact, Annotatio in cap. ix. lib. vi. Maregrave, p. 233.

and

and the *cuandu*, are probably the same animal. From the few notices to be collected from travellers, it appears that there are two varieties of these animals, which the naturalists have copied from Piso\* into their catalogues, as two distinct species, namely, the great and the small *cuandu*†. But the error, or the negligence of Piso, is apparent; for though he gives these coendous in two separate articles, and seems to regard them as distinct species, he represents both by the same figure: Hence we are entitled to pronounce them to be the same animal. There are also some naturalists who not only make two species of the great and small coendou, but have separated them from the *hoitztlacuatzin*, and given the whole three as different animals: I acknowledge, indeed, that, though the coendou and *hoitztlacuatzin* are probably the same animal, their identity is not so certain as that of the great and small coendou.

\* Cuandu major; Piso. Hist. Bras. pag. 324. fig. pag. 325. Cuandu seu cuandu minor; Piso. Id. pag. 99. fig. ibid.

† Hystrix longius caudatus, brevioribus aculeis; Barriere, Hist. Nat. de la Fr. Equinox. Porc-épic, pag. 153.—Hystrix minor; Leveque, Cuandu; id. ibid.

Hystrix cauda longissima tenui, meliitate extrema aculeorum experte. Hystrix Americanus major; Le Grand Porc-épic d'Amérique; Brisson, Regn. Anim. pag. 130.—Hystrix cauda longissima, tenui, meliitate extrema aculeorum experte. Hystrix Americanus; Le Porc-épic d'Amérique. Id. pag. 129. Hystrix aculeis apparentibus, cauda brevi et crassa. Hystrix novae Hispanie. Le Porc-épic de la Nouvelle Espagne. Id. pag. 127.

However

However this matter stands, the coendou is not the porcupine. The former is much smaller. His head and muzzle are proportionally shorter. He has no plume or crest on his head, and his upper-lip is not divided. He has a long tail; but that of the porcupine is very short. He is rather a carnivorous than a frugivorous animal; for he endeavours to surprise birds, small quadrupeds, and poultry \*, while the porcupine lives upon pot-herbs, roots, and fruit. Like the hedge-hog, he sleeps during the day, and moves about in the night. He climbs trees †, and suspends himself by the tail upon the branches. He may be tamed. He commonly lives in elevated places ‡; and he is found through the whole continent of America, from Brasil and Guiana, as far as Louisiana, and the southern

\* This fact, which is asserted by Maregrave and Piso, is not certain; for Hernandez, on the contrary, says, that the hoitzalcuatzin feeds upon fruits.

† Scandit arbores sed tardo gressu, quia pollice caret; descendens autem eadem circumvolvitur ne labatur, admodum enim metuit lapsum, nec salire potest; *Maregrav. Hist. Nat. Bras. p. 233.* — We spied a porcupine upon a small tree, which we cut down for the pleasure of seeing the animal fall. — He is very fat, and the natives eat his flesh; *Voyage de la Houtte, tom. ii. p. 82.*

‡ Caracem habet bonam et pergestam; nam assatam sapor comedi, et ab incolis valde estimatur; *Maregrav. p. 233.* — His flesh is very good, and it is scalded, like that of the hog. But the savage women previously pull off all the quills from his back, of which they make various trinkets. — After being scalded, washed, and roasted on a spit, it is of equal value with a pig; *Descr. de l'Amérique par DuRoi, tom. ii. p. 324.*

parts

parts of Canada. But the porcupine is confined to the warm regions of the Old Continent.

By conferring the name of porcupine upon the coendou, the same powers have also been ascribed to him, particularly that of shooting his quills. It is astonishing, that naturalists and voyagers should agree in this fact, and that Piso, who ought to have been less superstitious, because he was a physician, should gravely tell us, that the quills of the coendou pierce the flesh by their own proper force, and penetrate into the bowels of an animal. Though these facts be evidently absurd, Ray is the first author who denied them. But how many absurdities have been exposed by men of sense, which are still daily affirmed by other men who believe they possess a greater portion of understanding?

## S U P P L E M E N T.

IN Guiana there are two species of Coendous. The largest weighs from twelve to fifteen pounds. They keep always on the highest trees. They eat none during the day. Their odour is very strong, and felt at a great distance. The females bring forth their young, to the number of two, in the holes of trees. They feed on the leaves of these trees, and are not very common.

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Their flesh is extremely good ; and the negroes prefer it to that of the paca. According to M. de la Borde, the two species never mix. They are never found in pairs, except in the season of love. At other times, they are solitary ; and the females never quit the tree in which they have brought forth. These animals are apt to bite ; but their bite is neither strong nor dangerous.

The individuals of the small species weigh about six pounds. They are not more numerous than the others. The tigers are deadly foes to the coendous ; and they never appear on the ground during the day.

Plate CCX.



A. Hall sculp.

COENDOU