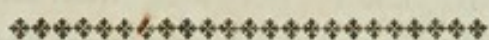


PLATYPUS ANATINUS.



CHARACTER GENERICUS.

Os anatinum.

Pedes palmati.

Novum ominino et inauditum constituit genus quod in tabula depingitur animal, juxta Linnæanam divisionem in *Brutorum* ordine reponendum, et Myrmecophagis proxime annumerandum. Diversum omnino ab omnibus *Mammalibus* quæ hætenus physicis innotuerint, perfectam rostri anatini similitudinem capiti quadrupedis adjunctam fortitum est. Rei novitate perculsi non nisi inspectione semel atque iterum attentissime habita persuadere nobismetipsis potuimus verum et genuinum esse quadrupedis rostrum; primo suspicantes artem lusoriam cum ipsa Natura felicissime certasse: eandem enim habet epidermidem, ferraturas, aperturam, totam denique rostri conformationem anas quæ *clypeata* dicitur Linnæi, seu alia aliqua anas latirostra.

Corpus depressum, lutræ corpori quodammodo simile nisi quod multo minus sit, pilo densissime obfitum molli et quasi castoreo, saturatim infuscatur, infra sub-ferrugineo-albet. Caput modice parvum, fere complanatum, rostro (ut supra diximus) anatis cujusdam latirostræ simillimo; ducta orbiculatim circa basin membrana, cujus pars superior æquat

N

lati-

latitudine circiter octavam unciae partem, inferior circa quintam. Cauda depressa, nec minus corpore pilosa, breviuscula et obtusa, latior ad basin, indeque sensim decrescens in apicem fere subbifidum, tres quasi uncias longa, corpori concolor. Longum est totum animal a rostri apice ad extremum caudae tredecim uncias: rostrum unciam cum dimidio. Crura brevissima in pedes late pinnatos desinunt, pinnis anteriorum longe ultra ungues excurrentibus; posteriorum tantum ad bases unguum pertingentibus. Ungues digitis anticis sunt quinque, recti, validi, acuti, duobus exterioribus paulo brevioribus. Posticis sex, longiores, magisque curvati; digito et ungue exteriori quatuor mediis multo brevioribus; ungue interiori seu sexto altius cruri adjuncto, ad instar validi et acuti calcaris. Crura omnia superne pilosa sunt. Pedes anteriores supra infraque nudi: posteriores supra pilosi, subtus nudi. Mandibulae inferioris, quae angustior est superiore, margines interiores striis seu ferraturis plurimis notantur, eodem modo quo rostrum anatis. Nares parvulae, rotundae, distant quasi quadrantem unciae ab extremo rostro, et octavam unciae partem a se invicem. Dentium nulla sunt vestigia. caret specimen palato, quod ex ore discerptum est; sed quatenus a situ conjicere liceat, probabile est simile fuisse palato anatis. Defuit quoque lingua specimini. Aurium spatio fere semiunciali ab oculis remotarum foramen ovatum, octavam unciae partem latum, pilo occultatur; nulla extrinsecus visibili aure. Oculi sub duabus albis maculis siti sunt non longe a basi rostri. Vivo animali verisimile est eos perexiguos fuisse, fortasse

fortasse etiam subcuticulares; cavitates enim profunde latent sub vellere haud majoris diametri decima unciae parte; unde conjicimus non indulfisse iis Naturam visum clarum et distantia prospectantem, sed illum tantummodo qui talpis et aliis nonnullis ejusmodi quadrupedibus conceditur.

A rostro et pedibus pinnatis non dubitamus *Platypum* locorum fluvialium esse incolam, in ripis cubile sibi posse effodere, vescique plantis et animalibus aquaticis.

De animali a cæteris adeo insigniter discrepante ut clarissimi Buffoni dictum comprobet, "quicquid possibile sit generari Naturam revera generasse," nihil in præsens habemus quod ulterius proferamus. Plenius innotescet phycis (uti sperare fas est) accurate examinatum in locis natalibus.

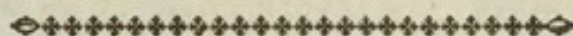
Non modo excusatos habemus verum etiam laudatos lectores nostros, si de re insolita et pene incredibili paululum addubitaverint: et fate-mur nosmetipsos oculis nostris vix ac ne vix credidisse. Audacter tamen possumus asserere nos nulla fallaciarum signa detegisse, mandibularumque margines, rictum, omniaque ad rostrum pertinentia, postquam ipsius macerationis periculum in aqua subierant, ut facilius moveri possent, fuisse omnino naturalia, nec peritissimorum anatomicorum acumini vel minimum fraudis vestigium patescere.

In Australasia generatur *Platypus anatinus*.

Ipfissimum animal penes est Dominum Dobsonum, qui arte anatomica quam in specimina vegetabilia pereleganter exercet merito inclaruit.



THE DUCK-BILLED PLATYPUS.



GENERIC CHARACTER.

Mouth shaped like the bill of a Duck.

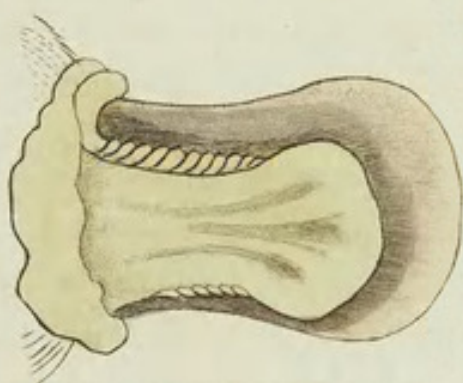
Feet webbed,

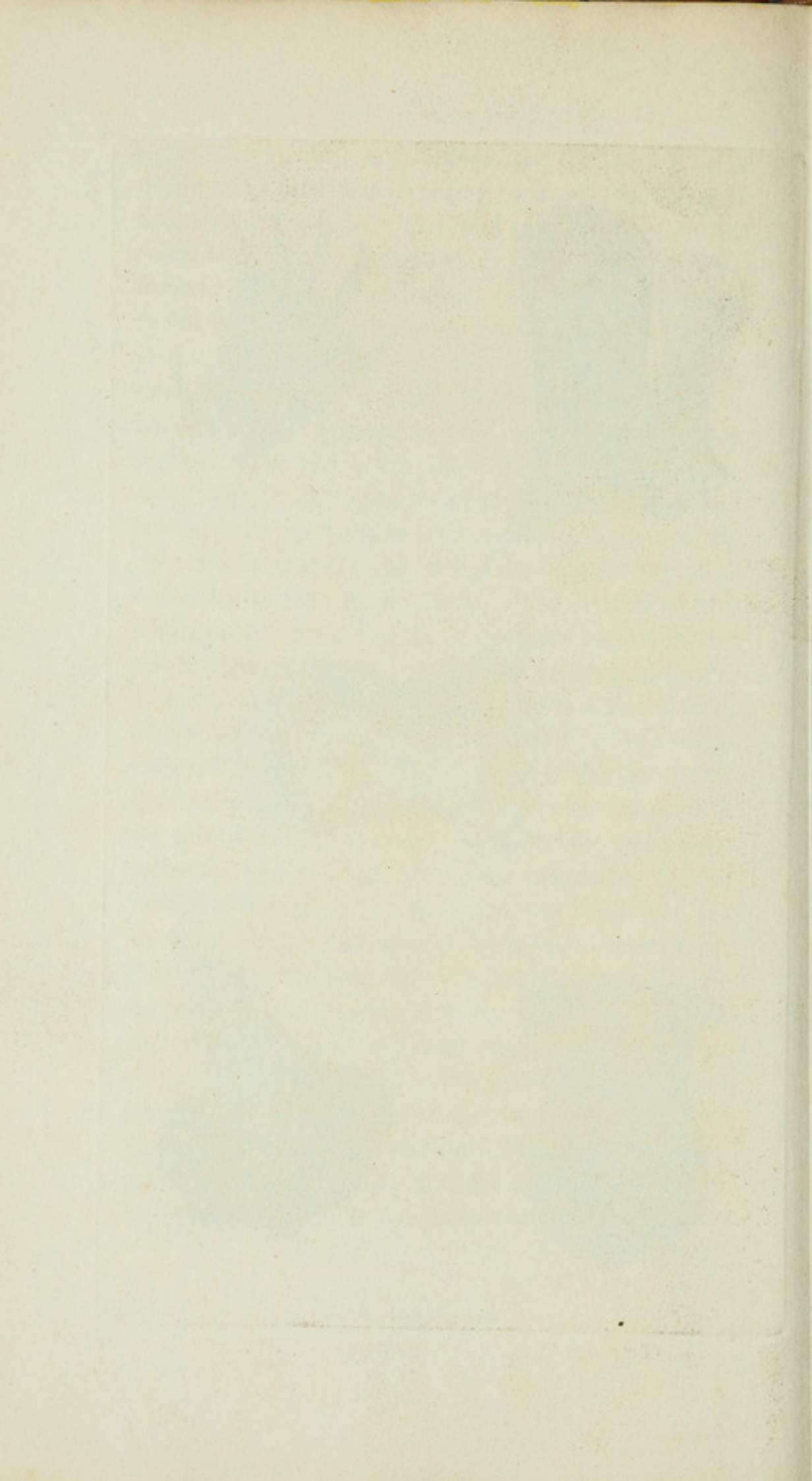
The animal exhibited on the present plate constitutes a new and singular genus, which, in the Linnæan arrangement of Quadrupeds, should be placed in the order *Bruta*, and should stand next to the genus *Myrmecophaga*.

Of all the Mammalia yet known it seems the most extraordinary in its conformation; exhibiting the perfect resemblance of the beak of a Duck engrafted on the head of a quadruped. So accurate is the similitude that, at first view, it naturally excites the idea of some deceptive preparation by artificial means: the very epidermis, proportion, serratures, manner of opening, and other particulars of the beak of a shoveler, or other broad-billed species of duck, presenting themselves to the view: nor is it without the most minute and rigid examination that we can persuade ourselves of its being the real beak or snout of a quadruped.

The body is depressed, and has some resemblance to that of an Otter in miniature: it is covered with
a very

a very thick, soft, and beaver-like fur, and is of a moderately dark brown above, and of a subferruginous white beneath. The head is flattish, and rather small than large: the mouth or snout, as before observed, so exactly resembles that of some broad-billed species of duck that it might be mistaken for such: round the base is a flat, circular membrane, somewhat deeper or wider below than above; viz. below near the fifth of an inch, and above about an eighth. The tail is flat, furry like the body, rather short, and obtuse, with an almost bifid termination: it is broader at the base, and gradually lessens to the tip, and is about three inches in length: its color is similar to that of the body. The length of the whole animal from the tip of the beak to that of the tail is thirteen inches: of the beak an inch and half. The legs are very short, terminating in a broad web, which on the fore-feet extends to a considerable distance beyond the claws; but on the hind-feet reaches no farther than the roots of the claws. On the fore-feet are five claws, strait, strong, and sharp-pointed: the two exterior ones somewhat shorter than the three middle ones. On the hind feet are six claws, longer and more inclining to a curved form than those of the fore-feet: the exterior toe and claw are considerably shorter than the four middle ones: the interior or sixth is seated much higher up than the rest, and resembles a strong, sharp spur. All the legs are hairy above: the fore-feet are naked both above and below; but the hind-feet are hairy above, and naked below. The internal edges of the under mandible, (which is narrower than the upper) are
ferrated





ferrated or channelled with numerous striæ, as in a duck's bill. The nostrils are small and round, and are situated about a quarter of an inch from the tip of the bill, and are about the eighth of an inch distant from each other. There is no appearance of teeth: the palate is removed, but seems to have resembled that of a duck: the tongue also is wanting in the specimen. The ears or auditory foramina are placed about half an inch beyond the eyes: they appear like a pair of oval holes of the eighth of an inch in diameter; there being no external ear. On the upper part of the head, on each side, a little beyond the beak, are situated two smallish, oval, white spots; in the lower part of each of which are imbedded the eyes, or at least the parts allotted to the animal for some kind of vision; for from the thickness of the fur and the smallness of the organs they seem to have been but obscurely calculated for distinct vision, and are probably like those of Moles, and some other animals of that tribe; or perhaps even subcutaneous; the whole apparent diameter of the cavity in which they were placed not exceeding the tenth of an inch.

When we consider the general form of this animal, and particularly its bill and webbed feet, we shall readily perceive that it must be a resident in watery situations; that it has the habits of digging or burrowing in the banks of rivers, or under ground; and that its food consists of aquatic plants and animals. This is all that can at present be reasonably guessed at: future observations, made in its native regions, will, it is hoped, afford us more
ample

ample information, and will make us fully acquainted with the natural history of an animal which differs so widely from all other quadrupeds, and which verifies in a most striking manner the observation of Buffon; viz. that whatever was possible for Nature to produce has actually been produced.

On a subject so extraordinary as the present, a degree of scepticism is not only pardonable, but laudable; and I ought perhaps to acknowledge that I almost doubt the testimony of my own eyes with respect to the structure of this animal's beak; yet must confess that I can perceive no appearance of any deceptive preparation; and the edges of the rictus, the insertion, &c. when tried by the test of maceration in water, so as to render every part completely moveable seem perfectly natural; nor can the most accurate examination of expert anatomists discover any deception in this particular.

The Platypus is a native of Australasia or New Holland, and is at present in the possession of Mr. Dobson, so much distinguished by his exquisite manner of preparing specimens of vegetable anatomy.



Shaw, George. 1799. "The Duck-Billed Platypus, *Platypus anatinus* [Pl. 385-386]." *The Naturalist's Miscellany* 10(CXVIII), <https://doi.org/10.5962/p.304567>.

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