

GENERAL ZOOLOGY
— or —
SYSTEMATIC NATURAL HISTORY

— by —
GEORGE SHAW, M.D. F.R.S.&c.

WITH PLATES

from the first Authorities and most select specimens

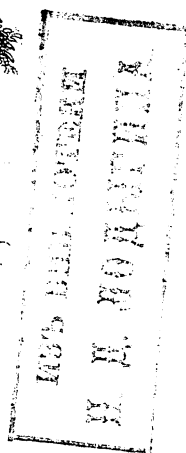
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VOLUME I.—PART II.

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ERRATA.—PART II.

- Page 277, l. 1, for true genuine *read* true or genuine.
 308, l. 20, for structures *read* structure.
 497, l. 8, for floccy *read* flocky,
 471, l. 14, for Viverræ *read* the Viverræ.
 408, for Tigerine Weesel *read* Tigine.

Directions for placing the Plates in vol. I. part II.

The Vignette to part II. represents the Long-tailed and Squirrel
Opossum of New Holland.

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QUADRUPEDS.

ORDER

F E R Æ.

PHOCA. SEAL.

Generic Character.

<i>Dentes Primores superiores</i> sex, acuti, paralleli: exte- riores majores.	<i>Fore-teeth</i> in the upper jaw six; pointed, parallel: the exterior larger.
<i>Inferiores</i> , quatuor, paralleli, distincti, æquales, obtusius- culi.	<i>In</i> the lower jaw four; blunt- ish, parallel, distinct, equal.
<i>Laniarii</i> solitarii, robusti, acuti; superiores ab inciso- ribus, inferiores a molari- bus remoti.	<i>Canine-teeth</i> one on each side in both jaws, large, point- ed: the upper ones distinct from the cutting-teeth; the lower from the grinders.
<i>Molares</i> quinque, v. sex, an- gusti, tricuspidati.	<i>Grinders</i> five on each side above, six below: obtusely tricuspidated.
<i>Pedes</i> postici coaliti.	

THIS genus, like the preceding, is marine. It is, however, so constituted as to require occasion-ally some intervals of repose, and even a consider-

able degree of continuance, on dry land; forsaking, at particular periods, the water, and congregating in vast multitudes on the shores, on floating ice, or on insulated rocks; especially during the season in which the young are produced.

The most common species, or that which seems to have been known from the times of the most remote antiquity, is the *Phoca vitulina*, or Sea-Calf, as it is generally termed.

COMMON SEAL.

Phoca Vitulina. P. capite inauriculato et cervice lævi, corpore fusco.

Lin. Syst. Nat. Gmel. p. 63.

Earless brown Seal, with smooth head and neck.

Vitulus maris oceani. Rondel. pisc. p. 458.

Phoca seu vitulus marinus. Gem. aquat. 702. Aldr. pisc. 722.

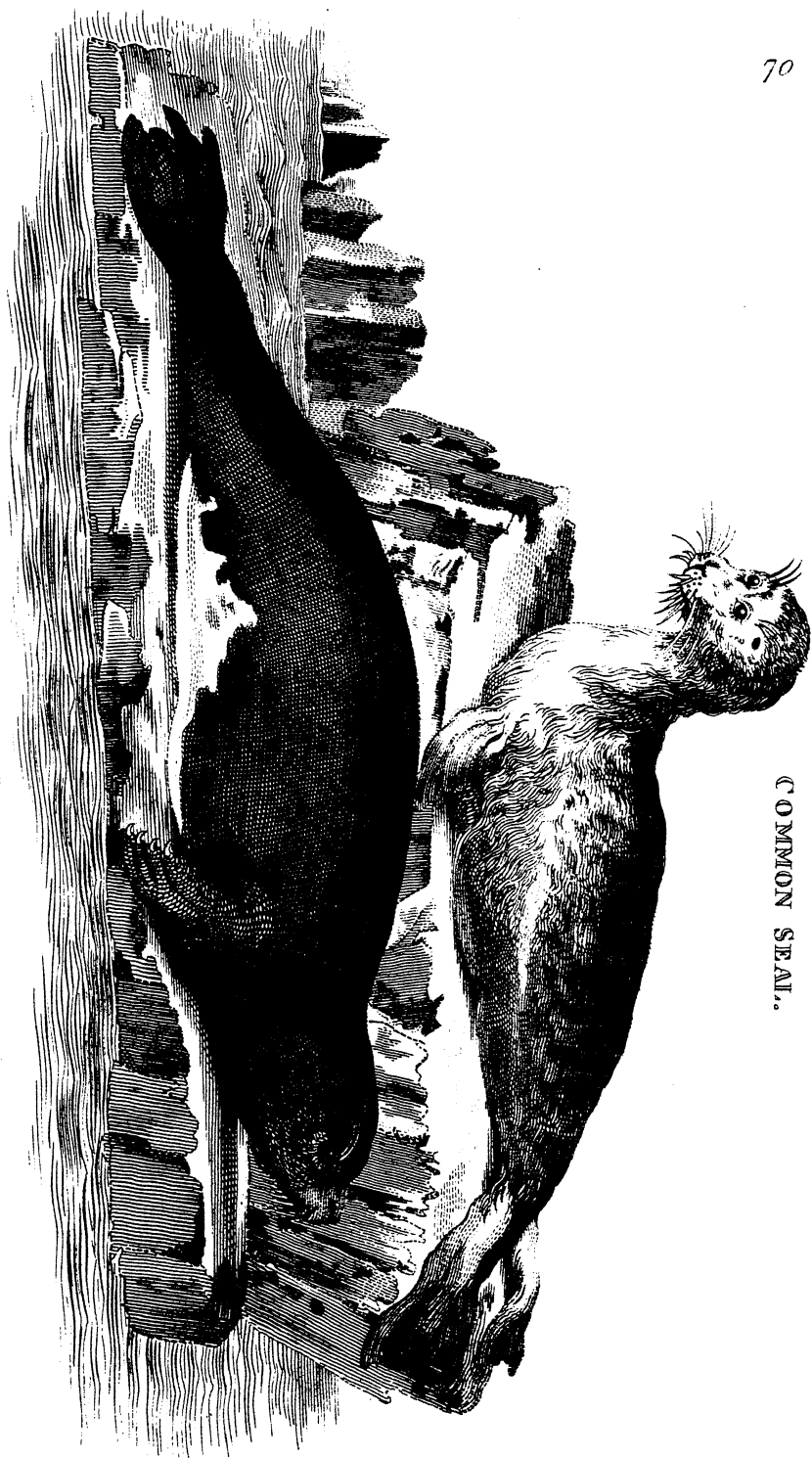
Le Phoque. Buff. 13. p. 333. pl. 45.

Common Seal. *Pennant Quadr. 2. p. 270.*

The common Seal, or Sea-Calf.

This animal is a native of the European seas, and is found about all the coasts of the northern hemisphere, and even extends as far as the opposite one, being seen in vast quantities about the southern polar regions. We are informed by Mr. Pennant, that it also inhabits some fresh water lakes, as that of Baikal, Oron, &c. and that in these lakes it is considerably smaller, but much fatter than when found in the sea. The Count de Buffon imagines the Mediterranean Seal, a distinct species from this, to have been the *Phoca*

COMMON SEAL.



PHEED SEAL, v. w.

Wood, Engr. London, Published by Colnagby, Fleet Street.

Hatch, Engr.

of the ancients; grounding his idea on the rougher and longer hair in that species, which he thinks must have been alluded to by Pliny, who speaks of a popular opinion that the hair of the Phoca, in the dried skin, always roughens or rises up at the time of the reflux of the sea, and which the Count de Buffon thinks could not have been imagined of the common or present species, on account of its short and close hair. Mr. Pennant, however, with much greater probability, supposes the present to be the ancient Phoca, since it agrees exactly with the description given by Aristotle, and which cannot be applied to the Mediterranean Seal.

The size of the Seal varies, but its general length seems to be from five to six feet. The head is large and round: the neck small and short: on each side the mouth are situated several strong vibrissæ or whiskers; each hair being marked throughout its whole length with numerous alternate contractions and dilatations. The parts about the shoulders and breast are very thick, and from thence the body tapers towards the tail. The eyes are large: there are no external ears: the tongue is bifid or cleft at the tip. The legs are so very short as to be scarcely perceptible; and the hinder ones are so placed as to be only of use to the animal in swimming, or but very little to assist it in walking; being situated at the extremity of the body, and close to each other. All the feet are strongly webbed, but the hind ones much more widely and conspicuously

than the fore. The toes on all the feet are five in number, and the claws are strong and sharp. The tail is very short. The whole animal is covered with short thick-set hair. In colour the Seal varies considerably, being sometimes grey, sometimes brown or blackish, and sometimes variously patched or spotted with white or yellowish. When these animals collect together in great numbers on the shore, they diffuse a very strong and disagreeable smell. This is a particularity observed by Homer, who represents Menelaus relating his adventure on the Isle of Pharos, where he was constrained to lie for a time among a flock of seals, disguised in the skin of one of these animals.

Seals may often be observed sleeping on the tops of rocks, near the coast; but when approached too near, they suddenly precipitate themselves into the water. Sometimes, however, their sleep is very profound, and it is even affirmed by some that the Seal sleeps more profoundly than most other quadrupeds. The structure of the Seal is so singular, that, as Buffon well observes, it was a kind of model, on which the imagination of the poets formed their Tritons, Sirens, and Sea-Gods, with a human head, the body of a quadruped, and the tail of a fish. The Seal is possessed of a considerable degree of intelligence, and may be tamed, so as to become perfectly familiar with those to whose care it is committed; and even to exhibit several tricks and gesticulations. Of this we have numerous examples. The female Seals

produce their young in the winter season, and seldom bring more than two at a birth. It is said that they suckle the young for about the space of a fortnight on the spot where they were born, after which they take them out to sea, and instruct them in swimming and seeking for their food, which consists not only of fish, but of seaweeds, &c. &c. When the young are fatigued, the parent is said to carry them on its back. The Seal is supposed to be a long-lived animal, and Buffon is even inclined to suppose that it may attain to the age of an hundred years. The voice of a full-grown Seal is a hoarse kind of sound, not unlike the barking of a dog: that of the young resembles the mewling of a kitten. They have, however, like most other quadrupeds, various inflexions of voice, according to the passions with which they are inspired. They are said to delight in thunder-storms, and at such periods to sit on the rocks and contemplate with seeming delight the convulsions of the elements; in this respect differing widely from the terrestrial quadrupeds, which are extremely terrified at such times. Seals are generally very fat, and are hunted in the northern regions for the sake of their oil, which forms a great article of commerce: their skins also are much used for various economical purposes.