

# 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

*Engraved principally by*

MR. HEATH.



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*Scapline / sculp.*

ИЗЪ БИБЛИОТЕКИ  
Н. Д. ЛОДЫЖИНА

# GENERAL ZOOLOGY.

VOLUME II.—PART I.

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*MAMMALIA.*

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1801.

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## ERRATA.—PART I.

- P. 28. l. 4. for *seven in circumference* read *seven inches in circumference*.  
P. 11. l. 1. for *petadactylis* read *pentadactylis*.

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



The Vignette to Part I. represents the Harvest Mouse of its natural size.—Page 62.

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COMMON  
PORCUPINE.



# QUADRUPEDS.

## ORDER

## GLIRES.

### HYSTRIX. PORCUPINE.

#### Generic Character.

<i>Dentes Primores</i> duo, oblique scissi.	<i>Front-teeth</i> two, both in the upper and under jaw, ob- liquely cut.
<i>Molares</i> octo.	<i>Grinders</i> eight.
<i>Digiti pedum</i> 4—5.	
<i>Corpus spinis pilisque</i> tectum.	<i>Body</i> covered with spines in- termixed with hairs. Four toes on the fore-feet; five on the hind.

#### COMMON PORCUPINE.

*Hystrix Cristata.* *H. palmis tetradactylis, plantis pentadactylis, capite cristato, cauda abbreviata.* *Linn. Syst. Nat. p. 76.*

Long-spined Porcupine, with tetradactylous fore-feet, pentadactylous hind-feet, crested head, and short tail.

*Hystrix.* *Gesn. Quadr. p. 563. Aldr. dig. p. 471. fig. p. 474. Jonst. Quadr. p. 163. t. 68. Raj. Quadr. 206.*

Le Porc-Epic. *Buff. 12. p. 402. pl. 51, 52.*

Crested Porcupine. *Pennant Quadr. 2. p. 122.*

WE have before observed, that in an arrangement of quadrupeds, from their obvious external characters alone, without reference to the form



and disposition of the teeth, the Porcupine and the Hedgehog might be placed together ; but such is the dissimilarity of these organs, that the one must of necessity belong to the Linnæan order Feræ, and the other to that of Glires.

The singular appearance of the Porcupine, so different from that of the generality of quadrupeds, must in the earliest ages have attracted the attention even of the most incurious ; the variegated spines or quills with which it is covered naturally suggesting the idea of a fierce and formidable animal : it is, however, of a harmless nature, and the quills are merely defensive weapons, which, when disturbed or attacked, the animal erects, and thus endeavours to repel his adversary.

The general length of the Porcupine is about two feet from head to tail, and that of the tail about four inches. The upper parts of the animal are covered with long, hard, and sharp quills ; those towards the middle and hind part of the body being longer than the rest, and measuring from nine or ten to twelve or fifteen inches in length : they are very sharp-pointed, and are variegated with several alternate black and white rings : the root, or point of attachment, is small : the head, belly, and legs, are covered with strong dusky bristles, intermixed with softer hairs : on the top of the head the hairs are very long, and curved backwards in the manner of a ruff or crest : the ears are short and rounded : the nose blunt ; the upper lip divided by a strongly-marked furrow ; the two fore teeth, both above and below,

extremely large and strong: the fore feet have four toes; the hind feet five; all armed with strong crooked claws: the tail is covered with short and rather flattish quills, which are often abrupt or truncated, rather than pointed at the extremities. This animal is a native of Africa, India, and the Indian islands: it is also found in some of the warmer parts of Europe, and is said to be not very uncommon in Italy and Sicily; but is supposed to have been originally imported into those parts of Europe from other regions. Mr. Brydone, in his tour through Sicily, informs us, that in the district about Baiæ the Porcupine is frequently seen; and that in a shooting party on the Monte Barbaro he and his companions killed several, but that the novelty of the amusement was its chief merit, and that he would not at any time give "a day's partridge for a month porcupine-shooting." He adds, that the party dined on porcupine that day, but that it is "extremely luscious, and soon palls upon the appetite."

The power of darting its quills with great violence, and to a considerable distance, so confidently ascribed to the Porcupine by the writers of antiquity, as well as by some of the moderns, seems now pretty generally exploded: it perhaps originated from an accidental circumstance; and it is surely not improbable that the Porcupine possessing, like other quadrupeds, the power of corrugating or shaking the general skin of its body, may sometimes by this motion cast off a

few of its loose quills to some distance, and thus slightly wound any animal that may happen to stand in its way; and this may have given rise to the popular idea of its darting them at pleasure against its enemies. That it really does cast them off occasionally with some degree of violence there is no reason to doubt\*. “The strongest and shortest of the quills (say the anatomists of the French Academy) are most easily detached, and are those which the animals dart against the hunters, by shaking their skin as dogs do when they come out of the water. Claudian accordingly remarks, that the Porcupine is himself the bow, the quiver, and the arrow, which he employs against the hunters.” The Count de Buffon reproaches the gentlemen of the academy with their credulity on this subject, and observes, that they seem to have adopted the fable for no other purpose than that of quoting Claudian; since, by their own account, it appears that the Porcupine does not dart his quills to a distance,

\* “Upon the smallest irritation it raises its quills, and shakes them with great violence, directing them to that quarter from whence it is in danger of being attacked, and striking at the object of its resentment with its quills at the same time. We have observed, on an occasion of this sort, at a time when the animal was moulting or casting its quills, that they would fly out to the distance of a few yards, with such force as to bend the points of them against the board where they struck; and it is not improbable that a circumstance of this kind may have given rise to an opinion of its power to use them in a more effectual manner.”

*Brewick's Quadrupeds, ed. 2. p. 444.*

but that they only fall off when he shakes himself. The lines of Claudian are these :

Ecce, brevis propriis munitur bestia telis,  
Externam nec quærit opem, fert omnia secum,  
Se pharetra, sese jaculo, sese utitur arcu !

Arm'd at all points in Nature's guardian mail,  
See the stout porcupine his foes assail ;  
And, urg'd to fight, the ready weapons throw,  
Himself at once the quiver, dart, and bow !

Some authors have gone so far as to assert that the Porcupine can dart his quills with such force as to penetrate a plank of considerable thickness. It is agreed on all hands, however, that the animal, conscious of the power of his armour, generally pushes against his adversary when assaulted, and can thus sometimes wound pretty smartly with his spines, and this is said to be particularly the case with a small species found in North America, and known by the name of the Urson, or Canada Porcupine.

Dr. Patrick Brown, in his Natural History of Jamaica, speaking of the common Porcupine, which, he says, is sometimes brought into that island from the coast of Guinea in the African ships, observes, that “ the force and mechanism with which this animal darts its long thorns at its enemy, when it is enraged, is really admirable : nor are the infinitely small setæ these are beset with less remarkable, by which they stick in the flesh with more obstinacy than a simple body of the same form would do. These little setæ are

are very observable to the touch ; for, on holding a thorn in your hands, and endeavouring to pull equally with both, you will find the thickest end to glide with much more ease through your fingers than the other."

The Porcupine feeds principally on roots, fruits, barks, and other vegetable substances : it inhabits holes or subterraneous retreats, which it is said to form into several compartments or divisions, leaving only a single hole or entrance. It sleeps much by day, and makes its excursions for food during the night. The female produces two young at a birth, and these, if taken early, are said to be easily tamed.

The Porcupine admits of considerable variety as to the length and proportion of the quills in different specimens and from different countries : the long crested bristles on the back of the head, in particular, are much more conspicuous in some than in others.

## PREHENSILE PORCUPINE.



## PREHENSILE PORCUPINE.

*Hystrix Prehensilis. H. pedibus tetradactylis, cauda elongata prehensili seminuda. Lin. Syst. Nat. p. 76.*

Short-spined Porcupine, with tetradactylous feet, and long half-naked prehensile tail.

*Hystrix cauda longissima tenui, medietate extrema aculeorum experte. Briss. Quadr. p. 129.*

Le Coendou à longue queue. *Buff. suppl. 7. p. 305. pl. 78.*

Brasilian porcupine. *Pennant Quadr. 2. p. 124.*

THIS is an American species, and is found in many of the hotter parts of that continent; particularly in Brasil, where it inhabits woods, and climbs trees; clinging occasionally to the branches by its tail, in the manner of some of the Opossums and Monkies. It is said to feed not only on fruits of various kinds, but also on birds. It sleeps during the greater part of the day, concealing itself in the hollows of trees, or beneath their roots. Its voice, according to Marcgrave, resembles the grunting of a pig. Its general length is about a foot, and the tail about eighteen inches. The whole animal, except on the belly and insides of the limbs, is covered with short, strong, and very sharp spines, of which the longest measure three inches, and are white, barred towards the points with black. The colour of the hair with which the under parts are covered is a dusky brown. The head is small; the nose extremely blunt; and the teeth very large and strong; the ears short, moderately large, and rounded: the feet have four toes each, with strong claws,