

GENERAL HISTORY
—OF—
DUCHESS COUNTY,

—FROM—
1609 TO 1876, INCLUSIVE.

ILLUSTRATED WITH
NUMEROUS WOOD-CUTS, MAPS AND FULL-
PAGE ENGRAVINGS.

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PAWLING, N. Y. :
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR.
1877.

ZOOLOGY.

MAMMALIA.—By mammalia are meant all those animals having warm blood, a double heart, and bringing forth its young alive. Of the *Carnivora*, or flesh-eaters, may be mentioned the Mole, Raccoon, Skunk, Weasel, Mink, Otter, Dog (five varieties of which are native), *Black Bear*,* *Wolf* and *Panther*.

Of the *Rodentia*, or gnawers, are the Fox; the Red, Striped and Flying Squirrel; the Woodchuck, or Ground Marmot; the Musquash, or Muskrat; the common Rat, Mouse, and the Grey Rabbit; the *Beaver* and the *Porcupine*.

Ungulata.—Animals with toes covered with a horny case, or hoof. Of these we have the Hog, Horse, Ass, Ox, Goat, Sheep, *Fallow Deer*, *Moose* and *Buffalo*.†

Aves, or Birds.—Birds of prey, *Accipitres*, include Eagles, Hawks and Owls. *Passeres*, birds of passage. This class includes most of those birds that depart for a more southern

* Such as are not now found here in a wild state are printed in italics.

† The vast gorges of the Highlands and these vales once abounded with the buffalo. —[Trumbull's Hist. Conn.]

Van Der Donck, writing of this vicinity in 1636, says: "Buffaloes are tolerably plenty, but these animals keep mostly toward the southwest, where few people go. It is remarked that half these animals have disappeared and left the country."

An early European traveler, visiting this vicinity, thus writes home:—"The animals here are of the same species as ours, (except lions and other strange beasts); many bears, wolves, which harm nobody but the small cattle; elks and deer in abundance; foxes, beavers, otters, minks and such like."—[Doc. Hist. New York.]

clime in Autumn, and return in the Spring. *Gallinæ*, or Cock tribe, include our domestic fowls, Wild Turkey, Partridge, &c. *Natatores*, or swimmers, includes Loons, Wild Ducks and Geese, &c. The following embraces the birds most common in the county, in addition to those already mentioned :

The Great Horned Owl,* that makes the woods resonant with its solemn hoots at night-time ; the little Screech-Owl that utters a harsh, disagreeable noise in the vicinity of barns and dwellings during the still hours of darkness ; the Whippoorwill,† whose plaintive cry issues from the thicket during the Summer twilight ; the Nighthawk, making its peculiar whirring noise as it dives after its prey ; the Chimney Swallow, that peoples the chimneys of old dwellings ; the Barn Swallow, Martin, Kingfisher and Humming Bird ; the little Wren that loves to linger near the habitations of man ; the Blue Bird, one of the earliest of Spring ; the Brown Thrush ; the Cat-Bird, the noisiest of our song birds ; the American Robin, Wood Pewee, Phebe-Bird, Blue Jay, Crow, Crow Blackbird and Meadow Lark ; the Bobolink,‡ that rejoices in the sunny meadows during the months of May and June ; the Sparrow, Bunting and Chipping-bird ; the Yellow-Bird, or American Gold Finch, that revels in the pastures and stubble fields of Autumn ; the Snow Bird that comes riding on the storm blasts of Winter ; the Red Bird, Woodpecker, Turtle Dove, Quail, Plover, Woodcock and Snipe.

According to a survey made previous to 1850 there are nearly 1,000 varieties of birds found in the State. The English Sparrow has been introduced, which multiplies so rapidly, and is of such a contentious disposition as to cause the apprehension that the smaller native birds will be driven off.

* "The clamorous owl that nightly hoots."—[Shakspeare.

† The notes of this solitary bird, from the ideas which are associated with them, seems like the voice of an old friend, and are listened to by almost all with great interest. At first they issue from some retired part of the woods, the glen or mountain ; in a few evenings we hear them from the adjoining coppice, the garden fence, the road before the door, and even from the roof of the dwelling house, long after the family have retired to rest. Every evening and morning his shrill and rapid repetition are heard from the adjoining woods ; and when two or more are calling out at the same time, and at no great distance from each other, the noise, mingling with the echoes from the mountains, is really surprising. Some of the more ignorant and superstitious dread seems on the decline.

‡ The happiest bird of our Spring is the bobolink —[Irving.

Reptiles.—There are three orders of reptiles found, viz.—the Serpent, the Lizard and the Turtle tribe. Of the serpents, two species are venomous, the Copperhead and Rattlesnake. The other varieties are the common Blacksnake; the Pilot Blacksnake, or Racer, found in the Highlands and Fishkill Mountains; the Milk or Chicken Snake; the Striped Snake; the Grass or Green Snake; the Brown Water Snake or Water Adder—a snake with its tail tipped with a horn, and frequently regarded with terror, but without cause; the Water Garter Snake, and the Hog-nosed Snake, called also Deaf Adder, Spreading Adder, &c.

Amphibia.—Animals living both on the land and in the water. Of these there are the common Bull-Frog;* the American Toad, a harmless and useful animal; the Peeper or Cricket Frog, called at the South the Savannah Cricket; and the common Tree Toad.

Fishes.—Of the Fishes found in the County, including the Hudson River, there are so many varieties as to forbid a mention of all. Among them are the Perch, Bass, Catfish, Mullet, Roach, Pond Shiner, Eel, Pout, Sucker, Trout, Dace, Minnow, Pickerel, Pike, Lamprey, (sometimes called Lamper Eel), Common Pond Fish, Chubsucker, Shad, Salmon, Sturgeon, Shark, Eel, Mossbunker, Porgee, Hudson River Sea Horse, &c. Over 900 varieties are found in the State.

Insects.—The order *Coleoptera*, beetles, is very numerous. The Boring Beetle, the Tumble Bug, Ground Beetle, Horn Bug, and some others of brilliant colors, are the most common of this class. *Orthoptera* includes the Cockroaches, Crickets, and Grasshoppers. The Katydid, so well known by the peculiar sound produced by its wing-covers on early autumn nights, belongs to the latter family. *Homoptera* includes the locusts; one species of these is noticeable for remaining seventeen years in the grub state. *Hemiptera*, bugs, comprises many of the insects injurious to vegetation, particularly the May Bug, Lady Bug, Apple-tree Blight, &c. *Lepidoptera*, butterflies, are very

* The most wonderful are the bull-frogs, in size about a span, which croak with a ringing noise in the evening.—[Doc. Hist. New York.

numerous. Among those that fly during the day the best known are the small yellow-winged Butterfly, and the large yellow and black Butterfly. The variety and beauty of their colors attract universal attention. Some of the nocturnal species are very large.

Common in the low grounds, during the Summer evenings, is the Fire-fly—an insect whose bright phosphorescence illumines the darkness. The Indians have the following chant to this flitting, white fire insect :

Fire-fly, fire-fly! bright little thing;
Bright little fairy bug; night's little king.
—Schoolcraft's *Oneota*.

Arachnida, Spiders, though a separate class, may be mentioned here. Some of them are very large and possessed of great beauty. The Long Legs, Clawed Spider, Tick, Mite, Louse, &c., also belong to this order.

The *Worms* have not yet been made the subject of general investigation.