

but fish, though he will sometimes eat frogs, water insects, and even the roots of plants. He has not, like the otter, membranes between his toes; an error which originated with Willoughby, and has been copied by Ray and other naturalists. Though every toe is separated, he swims with facility, keeps a long time under water, and carries off his prey to eat upon the grass or in his hole. Sometimes he is surprised in his hole by fishermen who are searching for craw-fish, whose fingers he bites, and then plunges into the water as his only place of refuge. His head is shorter, his nose broader, his hair more erect, and his tail much larger than the common rat. Like the otter he avoids large rivers, or rather those which are too much frequented. The dogs pursue it very furiously. He is never found in houses or barns, nor does he wander so far from the borders of the waters as the otter, which is sometimes found at a league distant upon land. The water-rat does not frequent high grounds nor dry plains but in moist and marshy valleys they are very numerous. The females come in season about the close of winter, and bring forth in April, generally having six or seven in a litter; they may probably bring forth oftener than once a year, but of this we have no certain knowledge.