

instruments fringed with innumerable processes, supplied by myriads of vessels, disposed like net-work, by which the blood is exposed to the action of aerated water, oxygen absorbed, and the process of vitality maintained. In reptiles, the respiratory organs are less developed than in any of the other vertebrated animals; the heart is so disposed, that at each contraction only a portion of the volume of blood is sent to the lungs; hence the action of oxygen on the circulating fluid is in a less degree than in any of the mammalia, birds, or fishes. As animal heat, the susceptibility of the muscles to nervous influence, and even the nature of the skin, are dependent on respiration, the temperature of reptiles is low, and their muscular powers are, on the whole, very inferior to those of birds or mammalia; requiring no integuments, as hair, wool, or feathers, to preserve their temperature, they are merely covered with scales, or have a naked skin. As they can suspend respiration without arresting the course of the blood, they dive with facility, and remain under water for a long period without inconvenience. They are oviparous, laying their eggs, which they never hatch, on the sands or banks. They present great diversity of form; some are extremely elegant, others grotesque and hideous, and many have dermal processes of the most fantastic shapes. Their habits are exceedingly variable; some are agile, others torpid; all hibernate, or rather relapse periodically into a state