

in plumage, though not so brilliant as the English kingfisher, which yet lingers, in spite of persecution, in the reedy islands of the Thames above London. Mr. Couper tells me, that the American bird dives after its prey, like that of Europe, and will often carry a fish, not much smaller than itself, and beat it against the stump of a tree, first on one side, then on the other, till every bone in its body is broken; it can then swallow it, in spite of its size.

A few days after our arrival (January 4, 1846), Mr. Couper took us in a canoe down the river from Hopeton to one of the sea-islands, called St. Simon's, fifteen miles distant, to visit his summer residence, and to give me an opportunity of exploring the geology of the coast and adjoining low country. We saw, on the banks of the river, the *Magnolia glauca*, attaining a height of thirty feet, instead of being only ten feet high, as in the swamps of New England. The gum tree (*Nyssa aquatica*), out of leaf at this season, was conspicuous, from the manner in which the smooth trunk swells out at the base, being partially hollow in the interior, so that it is often used by the negroes for bee-hives. Jays and blue-birds were very abundant, and there were several large hawks' nests on the tops of tall dead trees.

Among the zoological characteristics of the North American rivers, none is more remarkable than the variety of species of shells of the genus *Unio*, or fresh-water mussel, which inhabit them. Every great stream yields some new forms, and Mr. Couper has already discovered in the Altamaha no less than sixteen species before unknown; one of these, *Unio spinosus*, has a singular appearance, being armed with spines, standing out horizontally from the shell, and probably acting as a defense against some enemy.

On our way we landed on Butler's Island, where the banks of the river, as is usual in deltas, are higher than the ground immediately behind them. They are here adorned with orange trees, loaded with golden fruit, and very ornamental. We saw ricks of rice raised on props five feet high, to protect them from the sea, which, during hurricanes, has been known to rise five or