

distance they came again to the surface, but only just showed the upper part of their heads. When the female is swimming in the water, and has young ones, they are said to sit on her back. These animals are easily killed in numbers; but their skins are of trifling value, and the meat is very indifferent. On the islands in the Rio Parana they are exceedingly abundant, and afford the ordinary prey to the Jaguar.

The Tucutuco (*Ctenomys Brasiliensis*) is a curious small animal, which may be briefly described as a Gnawer, with the habits of a mole. It is extremely numerous in some parts of the country, but is difficult to be procured, and never, I believe, comes out of the ground. It throws up at the mouth of its burrows hillocks of earth like those of the mole, but smaller. Considerable tracts of country are so completely undermined by these animals that horses in passing over sink above their fetlocks. The tucutucos appear, to a certain degree, to be gregarious: the man who procured the specimens for me had caught six together, and he said this was a common occurrence. They are nocturnal in their habits; and their principal food is the roots of plants, which are the object of their extensive and superficial burrows. This animal is universally known by a very peculiar noise which it makes when beneath the ground. A person the first time he hears it is much surprised; for it is not easy to tell whence it comes, nor is it possible to guess what kind of creature utters it. The noise consists in a short, but not rough, nasal grunt, which is monotonously repeated about four times in quick succession: <sup>1</sup> the name Tucutuco is given in imitation of the sound. Where this animal is abundant it may be heard at all times of the day, and sometimes directly beneath one's feet. When kept in a room, the tucutucos move both slowly and clumsily, which appears owing

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<sup>1</sup> At the R. Negro, in Northern Patagonia, there is an animal of the same habits, and probably a closely allied species, but which I never saw. Its noise is different from that of the Maldonado kind; it is repeated only twice instead of three or four times, and is more distinct and sonorous: when heard from a distance it so closely resembles the sound made in cutting down a small tree with an axe that I have sometimes remained in doubt concerning it.