

cultivated, and extremely fertile on account of the vapours that rise from the lake. Burro, the largest of these islands, is two miles in length, and is inhabited by some families of mestizos, who rear goats. These simple people seldom visit the shore of Mocundo. To them the lake appears of immense extent; they have plantains, cassava, milk, and a little fish. A hut constructed of reeds; hammocks woven from the cotton which the neighbouring fields produce; a large stone on which the fire is made; the ligneous fruit of the tutuma (the calabash) in which they draw water, constitute their domestic establishment. An old mestizo who offered us some goat's milk had a beautiful daughter. We learned from our guide, that solitude had rendered him as mistrustful as he might perhaps have been made by the society of men. The day before our arrival, some hunters had visited the island. They were overtaken by the shades of night; and preferred sleeping in the open air to returning to Mocundo. This news spread alarm throughout the island. The father obliged the young girl to climb up a very lofty zamang or acacia, which grew in the plain at some distance from the hut, while he stretched himself at the foot of the tree, and did not permit his daughter to descend till the hunters had departed.

The lake is in general well stocked with fish; though it furnishes only three kinds, the flesh of which is soft and insipid, the *guavina*, the *vagre*, and the *sardina*. The two last descend into the lake with the streams that flow into it. The *guavina*, of which I made a drawing on the spot, is 20 inches long and 3·5 broad. It is perhaps a new species of the genus *erythrina* of Gronovius. It has large silvery scales edged with green. This fish is extremely voracious, and destroys other kinds. The fishermen assured us that a small crocodile, the *bava*,* which often approached us when we were bathing, contributes also to the destruction of the fish. We never could succeed in procuring this reptile so as to examine it closely: it generally

* The *bava*, or *bavilla*, is very common at Bordones, near Cumana. See vol. i, p. 160. The name of *bava* (*baveuse*) has misled M. Depons; he takes this reptile for a fish of our seas, the *Blennius pholis*. (Voyage à la Terre Ferme.) The *Blennius pholis* (smooth blenny), is called by the French *baveuse* (slaverer), in Spanish, *baba*.