

pean frog, lizard, sand-martin, and marmot. If the hibernal lethargy be observed, both in cold-blooded and in hot-blooded animals, we shall be less surprised to learn, that these two classes furnish alike examples of a summer-sleep. In the same manner as the crocodiles of South America, the *tanrecs*, or Madagascar hedgehogs, in the midst of the torrid zone, pass three months of the year in lethargy.

On the 25th of March we traversed the smoothest part of the steppes of Caracas, the Mesa de Pavones. It is entirely destitute of the corypha and moriche palm-trees. As far as the eye can reach, not a single object fifteen inches high can be discovered. The air was clear, and the sky of a very deep blue; but the horizon reflected a livid and yellowish light, caused no doubt by the quantity of sand suspended in the atmosphere. We met some large herds of cattle, and with them flocks of birds of a black colour with an olive shade. They are of the genus *Crotophaga*,* and follow the cattle. We had often seen them perched on the backs of cows, seeking for gadflies and other insects. Like many birds of these desert places, they fear so little the approach of man, that children often catch them in their hands. In the valleys of Aragua, where they are very common, we have seen them perch upon the hammocks on which we were reposing, in open day.

We discover, between Calabozo, Uritucu, and the Mesa de Pavones, wherever there are excavations of some feet deep, the geological constitution of the Llanos. A formation of red sandstone (ancient conglomerate) covers an extent of several thousand square leagues. We shall find it again in the vast plains of the Amazon, on the eastern boundary of the province of Jaën de Bracamoros. This prodigious extension of red sandstone in the low grounds stretching along the east of the Andes, is one of the most striking phenomena I observed during my examination of rocks in the equinoctial regions.

The red sandstone of the Llanos of Caracas lies in a concave position, between the primitive mountains of the shore and of Parime. On the north it is backed by the

* The Spanish colonists call the *Crotophaga ani*, *zamurito* (little carrion vulture,—*Vultur aura minuta*), or *garapatero*, 'the eater of *garapolas*, insects of the *Acarus* family.