

or hunger. The animal in running makes a rustling noise, which seems to proceed from the rubbing of the scales of its skin one against another. In this movement it bends its back, and appears higher on its legs than when at rest. We often heard this rattling of the scales very near us on the shore; but it is not true, as the Indians pretend, that, like the armadillo, the old crocodiles "can erect their scales, and every part of their armour." The motion of these animals is no doubt generally in a straight line, or rather like that of an arrow, supposing it to change its direction at certain distances. However, notwithstanding the little apparatus of false ribs, which connects the vertebræ of the neck, and seems to impede the lateral movement, crocodiles can turn easily when they please. I often saw young ones biting their tails; and other observers have seen the same action in crocodiles at their full growth. If their movements almost always appear to be straight forward, it is because, like our small lizards, they move by starts. Crocodiles are excellent swimmers; they go with facility against the most rapid current. It appeared to me, however, that in descending the river, they had some difficulty in turning quickly about. A large dog, which had accompanied us in our journey from Caracas to the Rio Negro, was one day pursued in swimming by an enormous crocodile. The latter had nearly reached its prey, when the dog escaped by turning round suddenly and swimming against the current. The crocodile performed the same movement, but much more slowly than the dog, which succeeded in gaining the shore.

The crocodiles of the Apure find abundant food in the chiguire (thick-nosed tapirs),* which live fifty or sixty together in troops on the banks of the river. These animals, as large as our pigs, have no weapons of defence; they swim somewhat better than they run: yet they become the prey

* *Cavia capybara*, Linn. The word *chiguire* belongs to the language of the Palenkas and the Cumanagotos. The Spaniards call this animal *guardatinaja*; the Caribs, *capigua*; the Tamanacs, *cappiva*; and the Maypures, *chiato*. According to Azara, it is known at Buenos Ayres by the Indian names of *capiyguá* and *capiguara*. These various denominations show a striking analogy between the languages of the Orinoco and those of the Rio de la Plata.