

swimmers, from whom it often bites away considerable pieces of flesh. The Indians dread extremely these caribes; and several of them showed us the scars of deep wounds in the calf of the leg and in the thigh, made by these little animals. They swim at the bottom of rivers; but if a few drops of blood be shed on the water, they rise by thousands to the surface, so that if a person be only slightly bitten, it is difficult for him to get out of the water without receiving a severer wound. When we reflect on the numbers of these fish, the largest and most voracious of which are only four or five inches long, on the triangular form of their sharp and cutting teeth, and on the amplitude of their retractile mouths, we need not be surprised at the fear which the caribe excites in the inhabitants of the banks of the Apure and the Orinoco. In places where the river was very limpid, where not a fish appeared, we threw into the water little morsels of raw flesh, and in a few minutes a perfect cloud of caribes had come to dispute their prey. The belly of this fish has a cutting edge, indented like a saw, a characteristic which may be also traced in the *serra-salmes*, the *myletes*, and the *pristigastres*. The presence of a second adipous dorsal fin, and the form of the teeth, covered by lips distant from each other, and largest in the lower jaw, place the *caribe* among the *serra-salmes*. Its mouth is much wider than that of the *myletes* of Cuvier. Its body, toward the back, is ash-coloured with a tint of green, but the belly, the gill-covers, and the pectoral, anal, and ventral fins, are of a fine orange hue. Three species are known in the Orinoco, and are distinguished by their size. The intermediate appears to be identical with the medium species of the *piraya*, or *piranha*, of Marcgrav.* The *caribito* has a very agreeable flavour. As no one dares to bathe where it is found, it may be considered as one of the greatest scourges of those climates, in which the sting of the mosquitos and the general irritation of the skin render the use of baths so necessary.

We stopped at noon in a desert spot called Algodonal. I left my companions while they drew the boat ashore and were occupied in preparing our dinner. I went along the beach to get a near view of a group of crocodiles sleeping in

* *Salmo rhombeus*, Linn.