

vived all these changes and revolutions, and still retain the leading features under which they first appeared upon our planet.

If we look to the state of the earth, and the character of its population, at the time when Crocodilean forms were first added to the number of its inhabitants, we find that the highest class of living beings were reptiles, and that the only other vertebrated animals which then existed were fishes; the carnivorous reptiles at this early period must therefore have fed chiefly upon them, and if in the existing family of Crocodiles there be any, that are in a peculiar degree piscivorous, their form is that we should expect to find in those most ancient fossil genera, whose chief supply of food must have been derived from fishes.

In the living sub-genera of the Crocodilean family, we see the elongated and slender beak of the Gavial of the Ganges, constructed to feed on fishes; whilst the shorter and stronger snout of the broad-nosed Crocodiles and Alligators gives them the power of seizing and devouring quadrupeds, that come to the banks of rivers in hot countries to drink. As there were scarcely any mammalia* during the secondary periods, whilst the waters were abundantly stored with

* The small Opossums in the oolite formation at Stonesfield, near Oxford, are the only land mammalia whose bones have been yet discovered in any strata more ancient than the tertiary.