

American continent, the settlers, deceived by the exaggerated accounts of the ferocity of crocodiles in Egypt, allege that the real crocodile is only found in the Nile. Zoologists have however, ascertained that there are in America caymans or alligators with obtuse snouts, and legs not indented, and crocodiles with pointed snouts and indented legs; and in the old continent, both crocodiles and gaviales. The *Crocodylus acutus* of San Domingo, in which I cannot hitherto specifically distinguish the crocodiles of the great rivers of the Orinoco and the Magdalena, has, according to Cuvier, so great a resemblance to the crocodile of the Nile,* that it required a minute examination to prove that the rule laid down by Buffon relative to the distribution of species between the tropical regions of the two continents, was correct.

On my second visit to the Havannah, in 1804, I could not return to the Sienega of Batabano; and therefore I had the two species, called caymans and crocodiles by the inhabitants, brought to me, at a great expense. Two crocodiles arrived alive; the oldest was four feet three inches long; they had been caught with great difficulty, and were conveyed, muzzled and bound, on a mule, for they were exceedingly vigorous and fierce. In order to observe their habits and movements,† we placed them in a great hall, where, by climbing on a very high piece of furniture, we could see them attack great dogs. Having seen much of crocodiles during six months, on the Orinoco, the Rio Apure, and the Magdalena, we were glad to have another opportunity of observing their habits before our return to Europe. The animals sent to us from Batabano had the snout nearly as sharp as the crocodiles of the Orinoco and the Magdalena (*Crocodylus*

* This striking analogy was ascertained by M. Geoffroy de Saint-Hilaire in 1803, when General Rochambeau sent a crocodile from San Domingo to the Museum of Natural History at Paris. M. Bonpland and myself had made drawings and detailed descriptions in 1801 and 1802, of the same species which inhabit the great rivers of South America, during our passage on the Apure, the Orinoco, and the Magdalena. We committed the mistake so common to travellers, of not sending them at once to Europe, together with some young specimens.

† M. Descourtils, who knows the habits of the crocodile better than any other author who has written on that reptile, saw, like Dampier and myself, the *Crocodylus acutus* often touch his tail with his mouth.