




## THE KANGAROO.


**H**ERE are now known to be upwards of seventy distinct Marsupial animals inhabiting Australia and the adjacent islands. Some are aquatic like the otters, others are carnivorous or insectivorous, or allied to the rodents and edentata; but all of them are stupid, and many of them ferocious in the extreme, and exhibit few of those beautiful instinctive traits which render the study of their congeners of the northern hemisphere so interesting.

They have been divided, by some naturalists, into eight families, but future researches in those comparatively unknown regions may reveal many other animals now unknown. The best known animal of the order, the kangaroo, was first brought to England in 1770, by Captain Cook, and has since had a place in almost every collection of animals. It lives exclusively upon herbaceous diet, and to a certain degree is a ruminating animal. Its appearance is very peculiar, there being a great development of the hinder quarters in proportion to the fore.

Its ordinary mode of progression is by a series of springs often of prodigious extent. The prints of the feet of one pursued through the sand, measured regularly fifteen feet. It springs from its hind limbs alone, neither the tail nor fore limbs being used, but the tail assists in steadying the animal, and enables it to use one of its hind legs, while it is poised upon the other and the tail. The male is much larger than the female, being nearly eight feet from the nose to the tail, while the female is little more than three. In Van Dieman's Land, the Boomer, as the great kangaroo is called, is regularly hunted by fox-hounds, and will sometimes run twenty miles before it can be overtaken. When it is brought to a stand, if it can get its back against a tree, it will defend itself against several dogs, ripping them up as they approach, with a single stroke of its hind leg. It sometimes adopts a singular mode of defending itself. Clasping its short but powerful arms round its antagonist, it leaps with it into the nearest water-hole, and keeps it beneath the surface until drowned. With dogs the males will do this whenever they have an opportunity, and it is also said they will attempt the same with man.

"I recollect one day in particular," says Mr. Gregson, "when a very fine Boomer jumped up in the very middle of the hounds, in the *open*. He at first took a few high jumps with his head up, and then, without a moment's hesitation, he stooped forward, and shot away from the hounds apparently without effort, and gave us the longest run I ever saw after a kangaroo. He ran fourteen miles by the map, from point to point, and if he had had fair play, I have little doubt that he would have beat us. But he had taken along a tongue of land that ran into the sea, so that on being hard pressed, he was forced to try to swim across the

arm of the sea, which cannot have been less than two miles broad. In spite of a fresh breeze, and a head-sea against him, he got fully half-way over; but he could not make head against the waves any farther, and was obliged to turn back, when, being quite exhausted, he was soon killed. The distance he ran, taking the different bends of the line, was not less than eighteen miles."

When the young first enters the pouch, it resembles the earth-worm in colour and semi-transparency, and adheres firmly to the nipple, its length from the nose to the tail being about one inch. Though able to grasp the nipple, it would have no strength to draw nutriment, but the mammary gland is acted upon by a muscle which forces out the milk into the mouth of the young. Professor Owen remarks that it can scarcely be supposed that the efforts of suction should always be coincident with successive jets of milk, and that there might be danger from an overflow of milk into the creature's larynx; but there is a special contrivance in the young to avoid this. Thus aided and protected by modifications of structure, both in the system of the mother and in its own, designed with special reference to each other's peculiar condition, and affording, therefore, the most irrefragable evidence of creative foresight. The feeble offspring continues to increase from sustenance exclusively derived from its mother for a period of about eight months. The young kangaroo may then be seen frequently to protrude its head from the mouth of the pouch, and to crop the grass at the same time that the mother is browsing. Having thus acquired additional strength, it quits the pouch, and hops at first with a feeble and vacillating gait, but continues to return to the pouch for occasional shelter and supplies of food, till it has attained the weight of 10 lbs.