

THE  
ANIMALS OF NORTH AMERICA.

Fresh-Water Fish.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTORY—DIFFERENT FINS WITH DESCRIPTION—LATERAL  
LINE—CIRRI—FECUNDITY.

Ichthyological science, and especially the branch of it on this continent, however much it has advanced in a knowledge of groups and species, is, and must long be, from the very nature of the animals upon which it treats, considerably behind the other branches of Natural History. Inhabiting an element whose recesses cannot be explored by man, and with a peculiarity of structure and of colouring which renders their bodies very difficult to preserve, the Natural History (properly so called) of Fishes, when compared with that of terrestrial animals, will ever remain little more than a collection of a few superficial anecdotes; while from the difficulty of their preservation and the unattractive appearance they then exhibit, few will study, and still fewer will collect them. Hence the Ichthyologist has much greater difficulties to contend with, in regard to materials, than he would experience in any other division of the *Vertebrata*, while he finds himself totally at a loss for that information on their natural habits, which gives such a charm to the history of other animals, and excites such a popular interest with the generality of readers.

Fishes, along with frogs and reptiles, constitute that great and primary division of vertebrated animals which are distinguished by their *cold* blood, in opposition to the two classes of quadrupeds and birds, which have their blood *warm*. In all cold-blooded *Vertebrata*, the