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In 2004 the University of Navarra in Spain created the Center for Indian Studies which aims to publish critical editions of historical texts from Latin America from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century. Álvaro Baraibar's edition of Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo's (1478–1557) *Sumario de la Natural Historia de las Indias* (Brief Natural History of the Indies) forms part of this publishing program. The *Sumario* dates from 1526 and is essentially the first part of Oviedo's *Historia general y natural de las Indias* (1535). Baraibar provides an excellent introduction in which he explains the historical importance of the text: it was the first to describe almost exclusively the flora and fauna of the New World. The footnotes are extremely detailed and add information on the personages mentioned by Oviedo, historical facts, and translations from sixteenth-century Spanish or from indigenous languages such as Arahua or Taíno.

The *Sumario* starts with the usual preamble addressed to Emperor Charles V in which Oviedo praises the king and declares his intention to write a natural history of the Indies using Pliny as a model. He emphasizes that he is witness to what he is writing and declares the objectivity and veracity of his text, unlike others. The text is divided into eighty-six chapters, and Oviedo starts by explaining the Atlantic crossing from Seville and its approximate duration. He then describes the island of Hispaniola but emphasizes that he will not narrate the conquest or other historical facts, but detail the geographical features and the flora and fauna on the island, information that the king is unlikely to have. He briefly comments on the topography, the architecture, and the indigenous population. He also explains life on the island of Cuba and the planting and harvesting of maize and cassava. He tells of iguanas, fishing methods, canoes (a word which comes from Arahua), and the different kinds of fish.

The main corpus of the *Sumario* focuses on the mainland, first detailing geographical, climatic, and maritime features. Oviedo then describes the native inhabitants, their physical attributes and various customs, for example, sexual practices and pregnancy, skirmishes between different tribes and weaponry, death rituals, alcohol, housing, and hammocks. The *Sumario* is then divided into short chapters that define the different species of animals, which in turn are divided into subcategories: mammals (tigers, anteaters, rabbits, armadillos, sloths), birds (eagles, parrots, bats, pelicans), insects (flies, bees, ants), snakes (coral, boas, iguanas), lizards and dragons, scorpions, spiders, crabs, and toads. They are generally ordered according to size, following Pliny's categorization in his *Natural History*. In addition, Oviedo makes comparisons and analogies between the Old and the New World. As Baraibar notes in his introduction there seems to be a conscious awareness on the part of Oviedo of the need of a literature about the New World, and it is significant that his text is written in Spanish and not in Latin. Moreover, it is notable that although the text was written for the king, it was also written for a wider audience, in particular the Spanish Court.

A description of the New World flora follows. Oviedo starts with the native fruit trees such as the *sapote*, custard-apples, guavas, coconuts, and papayas. In other cases Oviedo uses European terms to describe trees unknown to him (quince, pears—which in fact are avocados), or he refers to the indigenous term, for example, *guayacán*, *jagua*, and their use. He then follows with a subcategory of plants and grasses, which includes pineapples, prickly pears, and bananas. Illustrations complement the written text. Little space is given to minerals, but the means of extracting gold is included. A chapter is dedicated to the different species of fish, including turtles, sharks, and manatees, followed by a chapter on how to collect pearls. Oviedo ends his *Sumario* detailing the New World as a place of opportunity and plenty.

In conclusion, this edition makes the first text concerning the natural history of the New World accessible to both the general reader and to a more specialized one. The excellent footnotes guide the reading, and the introduction provides the historical context and outlines Oviedo's personal life. My one quibble would be that in the preliminary note Baraibar quotes so much from Oviedo's text that on reading the primary source, much has already been read previously. This, however, does not deter from the quality of the excellent introduction, and Baraibar's edition is an important contribution to the historiography of the period.