

Camp-Fire Gleanings.

"That reminds me."

A CONTRIBUTOR writes of one of the characters encountered on the way:

But the driver baffles description. He was Yankee, stage driver, Young America, and professor of modern profanity, compressed into 5ft. of sturdy independence. Finally, with a view to his moral culture, we offered him fifty cents to omit further profanity till we reached the end of the route. He accepted the offer with accompanying weight of self-control and went bravely along a few miles in unaccustomed silence, broken only by a few hesitating remarks about the weather and such subjects as could be touched upon without the aid of superlative English. The story of a bound running so fast that he split and passed through a sapling with only the loss of his tail, was, however, too much for the boy's credulity, and under the excitement of intense scepticism he said: "The bound must have been thin." This *lapsis lingue* cost him fifty cents, and made him so careful that we owed him thirty-five cents at our destination, where we arrived late in the afternoon. On the ride this irrepressible took great delight in a borrowed pipe, and frankly asked that it be given to him; a tobacco pouch much valued for its age he also courted, and when told that the owner had it twelve years, said, "You must be tired of it now."

Ever see a grizzly? I guess I did.

In the spring of '55 I left Coloma after nightfall, bound for Frisco. I had a couple of pounds or so of yellow stuff in a slim buckskin bag fastened round my waist next the skin. My plan was to walk as far as Folsom that night and take the morning stage. I started at that unseemly hour because I wanted to get away unnoticed.

It was a clear starlight night. Starlight in California usually does not mean much. But I was familiar with the way. As usual a stiff breeze was blowing coastward from the snow-capped Sierras behind me. The country—I kept some distance back from the river—is decidedly rolling, not to say hilly, covered for the most part with tall grass, and thickly decked with yellow flowers. Clumps of chapparal abounded, and here and there a live oak or pecan tree studded the landscape. It was early in the season, but already the grass was dry enough to rustle under foot.

I had completed fully three-fourths of the journey. In passing out from under a live oak, where the trail led through a sort of grove, I found my path disputed by a huge animal, that, with a horrible roar, rose on his forelegs a few paces in front. The sight and sound fairly paralyzed me, but as soon as I could move I wheeled and made for the tree. Catching sight of a limb outlined against the sky, I threw away my gun and sprang for it. To my after astonishment I reached my mark, and lost no time in getting among the branches.

No Jack put in an appearance, so I concluded the animal was badly wounded. I tried to locate my gun, but failed. There was nothing for it but to wait till morning, when I hoped to be able to fish up my gun and settle with the mountaineer. I found a tolerably comfortable position and—woke up on the ground. Day had broken. I was considerably dazed. Nevertheless, I distinguished an unforgettable sound in my ears. I scrambled to my feet, and, hastily entertaining the notion that I wanted to get up a tree, I dashed for a young pecan close at hand. In the act of climbing I glanced over my shoulder, and about 50yds. off I discovered the familiar form of an old wind-broken mule that had been turned out to die. The joke was immense. I grimly sought my gun and leveled it at the brute's head. His innocent gaze disconcerted me. After a moment's reflection, I threw the gun on my shoulder and went my way.

Yes, I once saw a grizzly. Two hunters killed him up in the mountains near Lake Tahoe. I saw his body on a wagon at Coloma. H.

Sea and River Fishing.

THE FULL TEXTS of the game fish laws of all the States, Territories and British Provinces are given in the *Book of the Game Laws*.

THE BLUEFISH.

FROM Nova Scotia to New Jersey the well established name of a popular and abundant fish is the one given as the title of this paper. Bluefish is now the accepted designation of the same species in the Gulf of Mexico, by transfer from New England. An old American name for the fish is skipjack, which has found its way into European books on fishes, and is paraphrased in scientific literature under the guise of the Latin *saltator* or *saltatrix*, a leaper. Rhode Island folk of the older times called the bluefish a horse mackerel, doubtless on account of a superficial resemblance to certain members of the mackerel family. In some other portions of New England it is the snapping mackerel or snapper, a term adopted also in New Jersey, and often abbreviated into snap mackerel and even mackerel. At New Bedford, Mass., the fish is sometimes called blue snapper. An old New York name is skip mackerel, and on the Hudson the misnomer whitefish is sometimes heard. Maryland, Virginia and North Carolina use the name greenfish. A correspondent last fall wrote me that "the name greenfish is universally applied to the bluefish in the fishing centers on Herring Bay, below Annapolis, Ind." Another term applied to the species in Chesapeake Bay and generally known in the markets of Baltimore and Washington, is tailor, or salt-water tailor, the latter to distinguish it from the fresh-water tailor, which is the hickory shad (*Clupea mediocris*). The old name skipjack is now best rooted in the region south of Cape Hatteras, but the overpowering influence of an aggressive fishery is rapidly establishing the term bluefish from Nova Scotia to Florida.

Relationships.—The bluefish is not one of the mackerels, but is the sole representative of a family which is now placed near to that containing the pilot fishes, crevalles, pompanos, amber fishes, etc. The butterfish, or harvestfish, and the rudderfish are relatives of the blue-

fish, although much smaller. *Pomatomus saltatrix* is the only species recognized at present over the wide range of this piratical voyager; but a casual examination of a specimen of the South African form gives the impression that it is shorter and stouter than the average American fish. We must, however, expect considerable variation in a species of such extensive range.

Distribution.—On the North American coast the bluefish ranges from Nova Scotia, where it is not a regular visitor, to central Brazil. In the Mediterranean the fish is well known, especially on the shores of Morocco. A series of interesting articles on the Morocco bluefish, written by "Swelle," was published in 1888 and 1889 by the London Field. In South Africa the species is abundant and thrifty, as well as in the seas of India and Australia. A singular fact in its distribution, noted by Dr. Goode, is its absence from the Bermudas and the Western Islands; it is unknown on the Atlantic coast of Europe also. Temperature is one of the chief factors in the distribution of the bluefish. The scarcity of the species in Buzzard's Bay about the middle of July caused anglers great uneasiness, and it made the fishing season so far a very short one. The reason of this was to be found in the condition of the water, which was too cold to suit the fastidious taste of the bluefish, although one of their favorite food species—the sea herring—was abundant. Last year the water was favorable and bluefish swarmed along the coast from Long Island Sound to Monhegan in Maine. Buzzard's Bay was full of them. In Cape Cod Bay, at the close of July, 1890, the fish were more abundant than for many years before. A summer temperature of 60° to 75° is grateful to the bluefish, and it is believed that 40° is about the limit of cold which it will endure.

Size.—It is recorded that in the last century this fish sometimes reached a weight of 40 or 50lbs. in Vineyard Sound; perhaps this is true, but our ancestors were good fishermen and left none of the big ones for their children. The largest specimen of recent times was mentioned in FOREST AND STREAM, June, 1874; it weighed 25lbs., and was captured with rod and reel by L. Hathaway, Esq., from the bridge at Cohasset Narrows, Mass. A friend of the writer is authority for the statement that 25-pounders were not uncommon on the North Carolina coast in 1888. This, however, is far above the average size of the fall run of fish. In the fall of 1889 a considerable number of bluefish weighing 15lbs. were noted on the New Jersey coast, but it was the first run of the size for many years. Last year the number of large fish from the Capes of Virginia to Rhode Island was remarkable. In the Lower Chesapeake big bluefish were extremely and unusually abundant during June. During the present summer my observations have been confined mainly to Vineyard Sound and the waters southward to the Chesapeake; in this area I have not heard of a bluefish above 10lbs. in weight, and the usual run includes chiefly fish of 4 to 6lbs.; later in the season we will again learn of larger individuals, fattened upon the herring and silversides which swarm in all our shallow bays.

Abundance.—The early history of the bluefish on our coast is somewhat obscure. Josselyn (1672) mentioned a "blew fish" or "horse" among the food fishes of New England; but he catalogued two kinds of bluefish, one of which was speckled. This may as well have been one of the seafishes of Maine (*Anarrhichas minor*) as any other species, and to this the name hound would be more appropriate than to the bluefish. The "blew houndfish" of Maine waters might have been *Anarrhichas lupus*, which is now present and is by some persons "esteemed the best sort of fish next to rock cod." From 1659 to 1763 the fish were recorded as plentiful about Nantucket during the summer, but in 1764 they disappeared suddenly. About 1791 the species was abundant in Florida and apparently absent from New York. DeKay states that it was unknown on that coast until about 1810, when a few appeared. In 1815, according to Dr. Mitchell, the young were taken plentifully from New York wharves in August; the largest one mentioned by that author was 13in. long and weighed about 14oz. In 1825 the abundance of bluefish in the region was noteworthy and in 1841 Vineyard Sound became the center of a great fishery. In 1837 the fish advanced northward to Cape Cod and ten years later to Cape Ann. From that time until recent years the species has fluctuated greatly in numbers and varied in the time of its arrival in a given locality. Off the northern coast of North Carolina for many years prior to 1877 there was a great fall and winter fishery for bluefish averaging over 10lbs. in weight. Gradually the fish came later and later until in 1876 they appeared at Christmas and in 1877 they failed to come and were not seen again until March of 1888, when they reappeared in vast numbers. For the last five years there has been no lack of bluefish, but the centers of abundance have varied. In 1886 the fish were more abundant at S. abright, N. J., than anywhere to the southward. In 1887 a very active fishery was located off Block Island. In 1888 Chesapeake Bay contained such an abundance of the fish that hauls of 17,000 and 25,000 were reported. Last year was a year of plenty and the distribution extended from the Chesapeake to Maine. Buzzard's Bay was another favorite locality for bluefish in 1890 and the number around Cape Cod was greater than for many years; schools estimated to contain 1,000 barrels of fish were noted off the coast.

Habits.—The bluefish is a pelagic species and migratory in its habits. It comes along the coast apparently from the southward, arriving off New Jersey usually about the middle of May, but sometimes a month later, and reaches Cape Cod sometimes in July. Its time of leaving the coast depends upon the temperature of the water and the supply of food. The date on the New Jersey coast in 1885 was Sept. 15, and in 1886 a month later. Further south the time of arrival is, of course, much earlier. Last year the species appeared opposite Roanoke Island in vast numbers in March.

This is one of the most destructive of all fish. It follows schools of alewives, weakfish, mullet, mackerel, scup, butterfish, and other valuable food fishes along the coast in summer, and in our shallow bays and sounds the young feed upon silversides, young herring, anchovies and other small fishes. The menhaden, alewife and shad have been driven far up the rivers to escape from the ferocity of this ocean pirate, and in many cases the helpless victims have been stranded on the beach in their efforts to avoid capture. The young bluefish ascend the rivers into fresh water; they may be seen under schools of small fishes, which they have driven

into some place favorable for the attack, and frequently darting up from below to seize their luckless prey.

Reproduction.—About the spawning habits of this fish nothing is known. Even the date of depositing the eggs is uncertain, although it probably takes place late in the winter and very early in the spring on our Southern coast. The very young fish have never been seen so far as we can learn. The smallest individuals known were found floating at the surface off the Virginia coast by vessels of the U. S. Fish Commission. The writer has seen examples about an inch long in Great Egg Harbor Bay on the last of August. Hon. Robert B. Roosevelt has recorded his discovery of fry of less than an inch in length in the Inlet of Far Rockaway, New York, on July 10, and the late Mr. Silas Stearns published his belief that the species spawns in the Gulf of Mexico in the spring. At Edgartown, Martha's Vineyard, it is supposed that the bluefish spawns about the end of July, on sandy bottom, east of the Vineyard, toward Muskeget.

Growth.—It is generally believed that the average length of the bluefish by the middle of August is about 5in.; by the end of September the length is 7 to 8in. A fish measuring 12 to 14in. is considered to be one year old. It is believed that the species grows very rapidly after it has reached the weight of 4 or 5lbs., sometimes almost doubling its weight during the summer. Dr. Goode gives the following relations of weight to length: A 1lb. fish measures about 14in.; 2lbs., 17in.; 3lbs., 21in.; 4lbs., 24in.; 5lbs., 25in.; 6lbs., 26 to 27in.; and 8lbs., 29in.

Capture.—One of the best known and most exhilarating methods of taking the bluefish is by trolling from a sailboat with a squid of wood, bone or metal, usually accompanied by a piece of white rag or eel skin by way of additional decoy. At Woods Hole a strong cotton line about 100yds. long, to which are attached on wire two large-sized sea bass hooks baited with a live eel, was the favorite rig until recently, when the caprice of the fish seemed to call for menhaden or some other bait. In fastening the eel one hook was passed through the lips and the other pierced the tail. The same outfit was used from a boat at anchor near rapid currents which floated the line at or near the surface, and also for heaving out into the surf and pulling in the line rapidly. A very popular style of fishing, now extensively followed, is known as chumming. For this purpose many anglers use an 18-thread Cuttyhunk line 200yds. long on a large reel and provided with a strong hook attached to about 1ft. of piano wire.

Two things are to be especially guarded against in handling a big fish—his mad rushes when first hooked and his propensity to run up faster than the reel will take in the slack line. A powerful fish with the tide in his favor will make a stubborn fight and a doubtful issue unless great skill is exercised by the angler. In chumming a favorite bait is a piece from the back of a menhaden containing the dorsal fin, the rest of the fish being ground or chopped up and thrown overboard to attract the fish. An artificial minnow is often used from a stationary boat instead of the squid or other surface lure, and the young are caught in shallow water near the shores with shrimp or pieces of fish. One of the most successful all around anglers of my acquaintance, Mr. Willard Nye, Jr., who is known to many of the readers of FOREST AND STREAM, gives the following timely hint from his own experience in trolling: "The value of knowing that bluefish are feeding on the smaller fish does not seem to be fully understood by the fishermen, for with few exceptions they stick to the eelskin drail or squid, whereas if they would use an imitation fish, not over 5in. long, made of block tin, at least three fish would be hooked to one with the eelskin drail. To meet with the greatest success the tin squid should have indentations cut or pressed to represent the head, scales and eyes; it should be rubbed bright with the back of a knife, and have a piece of eelskin 1½ or 2in. long hooked through the middle to make a suitable tail for the minnow. When trolling let the boat sail very slowly, so that the drail may sink into the school of bait, as most fish prefer to take their food under water rather than come to the surface to strike it and get their mouths full of air."

T. H. BEAN.

THE BIG FISH EAT THE LITTLE ONES.

Editor Forest and Stream:

I am in receipt of a letter from Mr. Henry Wright, the commissioner of the Duke of Sutherland, dated at Trenton Hall, July 10. As you probably know, Mr. Wright is an enthusiastic sportsman. Believing that an extract would interest your readers, I send it herewith:

"I am glad to hear from you that the deer are continuing all right, and hope they will breed the next season. You know the lake here is full of fish. I have been amusing myself by putting out a hand net—just a rabbit net used ordinarily in catching rabbits, about 50ft. long and 2ft. 6in. deep, with corks along the top. We put it out in the lake, tying one end to the weeds, and the fish swim against it, entangling themselves by floundering about. I go and examine it night and morning, and generally get three or four fish each time—pike and tench.

"To-day we emptied one of the ponds in the park. There were thousands of fish—pike, perch and roach, one pike weighing 10½lbs. It pleases one's curiosity to see what there is, and is useful in transferring some from one pond to another, but it is murderous work; so many get smothered in the mud. If ponds were properly constructed, so that the water could be run off quickly and not too much mud allowed, I am sure one might breed and sell tons of fish for the market, treating the business as a food farm. You must have weeds, as they form a harbor for the small fry to escape from the big ones, or else they would soon all be gobbled up, and besides I see that on the weeds are innumerable snails, which serve as food for the whitefish (roach), and they in their turn form the food for the pike and perch. It is wonderful how nature works—all in turn preying upon one another, up to man, who selects the biggest and best creatures to feed his body and brain, and so on up to higher nature, but I am rambling now, so I write to say good-night and kind remembrance to all."

The deer referred to by Mr. Wright are three fallow deer received from the Duke last spring and placed in my park at Stanley, N. J. Since then one of the does has given birth to a beautiful male fawn, which is doing remarkably well. GEO. SHEPARD PAGE.