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THE MENHADEN.

A FISH of the herring family, a little larger than the river herring or alewife, is at present subject of heated discussion in the newspapers and in Congressional committee rooms. The struggle between the advocates of State control of the fisheries and the menhaden purse-seine interests has been sharp and protracted, but it will probably go against the commercial fishermen as heretofore. Massachusetts has closed Buzzard's Bay against the purse-seine on the ground that the menhaden is the principal food of certain larger fishes which inhabit this body of water for a longer or shorter portion of the year, and if this fish becomes scarce the food fishes will cease to come into the bay. The bluefish, the striped bass and the squeteague are the most important species known to feed upon menhaden at Buzzard's Bay; the bonito is another with the same feeding habits, but this is not now prized as a food fish nor on account of its game qualities. Practically the objection to the wholesale capture of menhaden arises from the fear of driving away bluefish.

What are the habits of the menhaden, the source of so much contention? In the Northern States it appears on the coast early in the spring or with the approach of summer and disappears in the fall. It swarms in the bays and sounds when the surface of the water reaches a temperature of about 51°, and is often driven into brackish water by its enemies. The migrations of the menhaden have received comparatively little study. The fish come into the Chesapeake in February or March; they are on the New Jersey coast early in May; enormous schools have been seen in New York Bay on May 10; by the middle of June they have appeared in Long Island Sound and range eastward to Nantucket and Buzzard's Bay. The northern limit of the species is the Bay of Fundy; but in some seasons it does not visit the waters north of Cape Cod. In the fall the schools leave the shores except south of Hatteras, where the fish remains throughout the year. Where the menhaden spends the winter is uncertain, but there is reason to believe that the young at least seek the deep parts of bays when cold weather sets in. The great schools are represented as swimming out to sea to the inner boundary of the Gulf Stream.

The east coast of Florida has been considered to mark the southern limit of the common menhaden, but Dr. Henshall recently sent a fish from west Florida which appears to be the same as the menhaden of Northern waters.

The food of this fish, if we may judge from the examination of stomach contents, consists chiefly of microscopic animal and vegetable organisms usually surrounded by a mass of dark greenish or brownish mud. It seems certain also that oily substances floating at the surface form an important element of its food. Fishermen believe that menhaden consume the minute red and green crustaceans that swarm in the water and help support the mackerel and the alewife. Sometimes the menhaden

takes food which makes it liable to decay and renders it unsuitable for bait.

About the spawning of the menhaden little is known; it may be considered established, however, that the fish does not breed upon the coast of New England and New York, although Capt. Atwood once saw a few ripe females in December at Provincetown, Mass., which were detained in the creeks by accident.

About Nov. 7, 1874, Delaware Bay was crowded from Cape May to Cape Henlopen with unusually large menhaden, nearly three-fourths of which contained eggs approaching maturity; but 60 hours later not one of them remained on the coast.

On Nov. 27, 1879, Col. McDonald obtained a menhaden from Hampton Creek, Va., in which the eggs were nearly ripe. It has been reported, but not verified, that the fish have been seen off the Virginia coast about Christmas so ripe that eggs and milt could be easily pressed from them.

The enemies of the menhaden are numerous and formidable. Among the whales the fin-back and the bone whale are especially destructive. Dolphins and porpoises consume enormous numbers. Acres of sbarks have been known to surround schools of the fish and annihilate them. One observer has counted 100 menhaden from a single shark's stomach. The horse mackerel is another scourge to the menhaden, and the swordfish and sailfish are not much less destructive. The ravages of the bluefish are so well known as to require only passing notice. The cod, the pollock, the whiting, the bonito, striped bass, and weakfish all take a prominent part in the slaughter of this helpless fish. In southern waters the gar pike, the large-mouthed black bass, the catfishes and the tarpon prey upon menhaden. The commercial fisheries take about 700,000,000 annually, but these are a very small fraction of the total consumption.

It has been stated by Dr. Goode that the mission of the menhaden is to be eaten. Men use it as food fresh, salted or smoked; also in the form of sardines, extract of fish, etc. The scrap left after pressing out the oil is fed to cattle and poultry. The principal uses of the fish are for bait and for the manufacture of oil and fertilizers. The commercial products are worth upward of two million dollars annually; the value of the menhaden to the angler and the line-fishermen is best appreciated when the caprice of the fish, or its sensitiveness to temperature, result in its absence from its accustomed haunts.

DELMONICO'S WOODCOCK ON ICE.

THE New York Legislature has amended the Gould bill by taking away from the prosecuting officers authority to bring suits in a county adjoining that in which the offense was committed. This provision is a part of the present law; experience has demonstrated its wisdom; and we regret that the Legislature has deemed fit to omit such a useful clause.

The provision was originally incorporated in the law for this reason: In certain sections, particularly in the North Woods, prosecutions for game offenses were nullified because local sentiment did not sustain them, and it was difficult to get a jury which would convict. Or it might be that the prosecuting attorneys of the county could not be trusted to do their duty. The transfers to another county have in a large measure corrected this evil; and the game laws have been more efficiently enforced.

In the particular counties referred to there is now less need of such a provision than formerly because public opinion there is healthier and sustains the laws. Convictions are readily secured to-day in courts where five years ago such a thing would have been impossible. But elsewhere, as in New York city, the provision is still urgently needed. It ought to be within the option of the game protector, when he finds that the District Attorney of New York city will not do his duty, to remove the cause to another county.

Take the instance of the Delmonico unlawful woodcock—the case which District Attorney Delancey Nicoll has now stored away, like a woodcock on ice. After making the game protector all sorts of promises, that the case would be tried "right away," "in a few weeks," "on Feb. 23," and more to a like effect, he put it into the City Court, where as No. 6,941 it has a thousand cases ahead of it, and where in the customary order of events it will keep for months to come, like a woodcock in Delmonico's refrigerator. The game

protector has all the evidence required; there is no reason why the case, dating from July of 1890, should not have been tried months ago, had Mr. Nicoll displayed any willingness to prosecute the Fifth avenue restaurant concern. If one case like this is to be refrigerated by the District Attorney, we have no assurance that he will not treat others in the same manner. Under these conditions the protector should be empowered to take his evidence and his papers elsewhere. With this provision of the law stricken out, and with New York District Attorneys who would refrain from woodcock case prosecutions, Delmonico's might go on year after year serving birds to its guests out of season, with a snap of the thumb to game protectors and the sportsmen of the State.

SNAP SHOTS.

A REPORT has been going the rounds that the Department of Agriculture was about to introduce the mongoose into this country to make war on vermin. We are enabled to state on the best of authority that the Department has never contemplated the introduction of this pest into the United States. The introduction of exotic species in general is contrary to the policy of the Department, and has been for many years, as appears in the published reports of Dr. C. Hart Merriam, Chief of the Bureau of Ornithology and Mammalogy. The newspaper article which stated that it was intended to introduce the mongoose was based on the vivid imagination of a reporter.

The Pottsville (Pa.) Game and Fish Protective Association is an enterprising organization, whose members, not content with arresting illegal shooters and planting trout fry, are bent on following the lead of such societies as the Massachusetts Association in the good work of putting out game birds. There is also on foot a movement to join forces with other associations in the county in the formation of a county league. We hope to chronicle the success of the plan. We trust that the society may flourish and expand and attain to a green old age, as full of years as the Pennsylvania Society for the Abolition of Slavery, the Relief of Free Negroes Unlawfully Held in Bondage, and the Improvement of the African Race, which has this year held its 117th annual meeting, and reported a good balance in the treasury.

Illinois has been paying a bounty of two cents per head for English sparrows. The period fixed was from Jan. 1 to March 1. During those three months the county treasurers have paid out in round figures \$9,000 for 450,000 sparrows. It is reported that there is no perceptible diminution of the pests, and that the campaign has been a failure. The sparrows keep right on multiplying. The beauty of a bounty law is that nobody can begin to estimate the expenditure of public funds its operation will entail. California provided a coyote bounty of \$5 per scalp a year ago, and the warrants issued for payments for the year 1891 count up \$99,070.

The Game Bill in the New York Legislature is not perfect; certain of its provisions cannot be approved; nevertheless, as a whole the bill is vastly better than the present law. For that reason, every person genuinely concerned with the protection of New York fish and game should use his best endeavors to promote the passage of the bill. The principal sections are printed in our game columns. Immediately upon the Governor's signature, if the bill shall be sent to him, we shall publish the full text of the law as a supplement to the *Book of the Game Laws*.

Because of his rare fund of information about fish and fishing, and his known active and practical interest in fishculture and fish protection, Mr. A. N. Cheney of Glens Falls, N. Y., would make an excellent Fish Commissioner; and his appointment to the office would bring to the board an accession of decided strength.

These lines, ascribed to Whyte-Melville, struck a responsive chord when repeated by Mr. A. D. Stewart, of Hamilton, Ont., at the Syracuse convention of New York sportsmen:

When sportsmen meet, in cold or heat,
No matter what the weather,
No feuds are heard, the thing's absurd,
They're always friends together.