

NOTES ON THE OCCURRENCE OF A YOUNG CRAB-EATER (ELACATE CANADA), FROM THE LOWER HUDSON VALLEY, NEW YORK.

BY

A. K. FISHER, M. D.,
Department of Agriculture.

Although the adult Crab-eater, Cobia, Ling, or Coal-fish, as the species is variously designated, has been well known for a long time, the young, strange to say, has escaped notice until recently. During the summer of 1887, Dr. Tarleton H. Bean made a study of the fishes of Great Egg Harbor Bay, New Jersey, and among various things discovered was the long-sought young of this species. In the report on the collection (Bull. U. S. Fish Com., VII, 1888, 144) he describes two individuals which were captured August 2 and August 23.

The most striking difference between the adult and young fish, irrespective of size, is the shape of the caudal fin, which in the former is deeply forked and in the latter uniformly rounded. In June, 1876, nearly eleven years before Dr. Bean captured these specimens, the writer received a young fish of this species, measuring 95^{mm} in length, from a fisherman who caught it in a minnow seine about 1 mile north of the village of Sing Sing, New York, in the broad and shallow cove formed by the expansion of the Croton River as it enters the Hudson.

The occurrence of this fish in the lower Hudson River, taken in connection with the many austral forms of mammals, birds, reptiles, batrachians, insects, and plants which grow along its banks, shows how decidedly southern are the fauna and flora of the southern portion of New York State.

The river seems to be about the northern limit of its distribution, although adults are occasionally taken off Cape Cod, and once a specimen was captured in Boston Harbor.

The species inhabits the warmer portions of both oceans and extends north along our eastern coast regularly to the Chesapeake. Nothing could be learned of the habits of the young fish further than it was alone, as were Dr. Bean's specimens, so, presumably, they must soon separate and lead a solitary life, as the adults are said to do. The Crab-eater is very voracious, feeding extensively on crabs and the smaller fish, hunting its prey much after the manner of the pike.

Specimens are taken that measure 1½ meters (5 feet) in length, and weigh nearly 10 kilograms (20 pounds); hence the Crab-eater is entitled to prominence as a food-fish, not only on account of the delicate flavor of its flesh, but also for its suitable size.