

Beyond these limits we have found no fish. A comparison of a fishing chart of 1878 with one of 1883 shows great changes for so short a time. During the spring large schools of red snappers come inshore—perhaps after small fishes—but they swim at the surface, and cannot be taken with hook and line. The Key West grouper fishermen have been able to catch but few fish of late. They say that their grounds, which extend from Key West to Cedar Keys, are worn out. As other and improved means are adopted to secure fish, there will no doubt prove to be a sufficient supply for a long time, but when we find them disappearing so fast before our comparatively small fishery we are inclined to look farther into the future than we otherwise would.

Should the Albatross come this way I will take pleasure in doing anything that I can to forward the exploration, and, if my personal services would be acceptable, can direct her to all of the fishing grounds, &c.

I will undertake to do something at once in regard to the collection of porpoises. Nearly every day at sea they play about the smacks and could be easily harpooned. I do not think that there are any harpoons in the city, but will look around to-morrow. There are seemingly at least three kinds of porpoises, besides the so-called blackfish, sperm-whale, and finback whale. The larger porpoise, uniform brown, lives in the bays and at sea, sometimes straggling a mile or so up fresh-water rivers. The two smaller kinds, one plain brown and the other mottled with white, live exclusively at sea, I think.

Whales seldom come inside of 40 fathoms of water, but black fish are seen within a half mile of the beach.

PENSACOLA, FLA., *May 5, 1883.*

120.—PROPOSED LIMITATION OF MENHADEN FISHING TO JUNE 1, AND OF MACKEREL FISHING TO JUNE 15.—OCCURRENCE OF HERRING.

By W. A. ABBE.

[From letters to Prof. S. F. Baird.]

It seems to me that an easy way to settle the dispute between the shore fishermen, or the amateur fishermen on the Jersey coast, and our menhaden fishermen is to pass a general law refusing to grant fishing or coasting licenses to menhaden fishermen before June 1 of each year. This would allow the fish to settle on their feeding grounds, and I am confident that they would return to the Maine coast.

NEW BEDFORD, MASS., *September 7, 1882.*

I have recently conversed with a good many owners and fishermen from Booth Bay to Portland, and have been surprised to find such a general sentiment in favor of a law restricting the catching of mackerel before June 15. I am assured also that the same sentiment exists at

Gloucester and Provincetown. I am not specially interested in the mackerel fishery, but I am largely in the menhaden.

There was an enormous body of herring on the coast about the first week of September. Great schools of them were seen in Ipswich Bay, and from Cape Ann to Portland. I had no information about them to the westward of Cape Cod.

NEW BEDFORD, *October 13, 1882.*

121.—WHY THE CATCHING OF MENHADEN WITH SEINES, ETC. SHOULD BE RESTRICTED.

By DAVID F. VAIL.

[From a letter to Prof. S. F. Baird.]

I have observed that the fish come in the spring at about the same time regardless of weather, and that there are large schools of spawning fish. They come for that purpose and ought to be protected if possible. If there is not some law passed to prohibit the catching of these fish on this coast with purse nets, pounds, and other traps, during the months of April and May, it will be only a few years before the menhaden will be annihilated as completely as they have been on the coast of Maine.

I know a good many of my brother manufacturers will not agree with me; but the reason is that they have steamers that can go down the coast during the months of April and May and catch up these spawning fish before they get to their spawning grounds. It is my belief that if the fish could be left until the spawning season is over, they would catch just as many fish and leave the spawn to grow up and make fishing good for years to come. I am the oldest person in the business, except one, that I know of. I have been engaged in it the last 20 years, and have watched it from year to year.

RIVERHEAD, N. Y., *February 20, 1883.*

122.—OCCURRENCE OF BALISTES CAPRISCUS GMELIN (LEATHER-JACKET OR FILE-FISH) AT NEW BEDFORD, MASS.

BY THOMAS R. LUCE.

[From a letter to Prof. S. F. Baird.]

The fish which I send by express was caught to-day in the waters of this place near Round Hills. I was fishing in about 2 fathoms of water, with lobster bait, for tautog, and succeeded in catching three of these, much about the same time. I therefore think they must have run in schools. Please inform me of its name.

NO. 127 CEDAR STREET, NEW BEDFORD, MASS.,

September 25, 1883.