

115.—NOTES ON THE GREAT LAKE FISHERIES, DEPLETION OF BLACK BASS, ETC.

By Dr. E. STERLING.

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

As you seem to be collecting for the National Museum everything that pertains to fish and fishing, I send a landing-net, fish-spear, gaff-hook, and fish-line dryer, all of home make. The landing net is not such as is made by the manipulator of the salmon or trout rod, but such as did good service among the Lake Erie Islands some fifteen or more years ago, when black bass averaged from 3 to 5½ pounds each, and blue pike (*Lucioperca*) by the thousands from 5 to 20 pounds each. With a school of the former ranging from one to many hundreds there was no time for playing with the split bamboo. It was "bait, yank, and hist in" 500 pounds of this fish in part of a day's fishing; and this was lively work and glorious fun. The many friends at home who partook of the harvest of the lake will agree with him and cry, "Repeat, old fisher-friend; the pot and frying-pans are again empty."

The pound nets have little to do with the depletion of the black bass among the smaller islands of this group, as in many cases they are not set within several miles of them. This depletion is caused entirely by hook and line fishing. I have never known a black bass to be taken in a gill net. This fish, a few years so numerous and of full weight, is now fast disappearing, and when found in the market runs from one-half a pound to 2½ pounds each. To be sure, there are a few out-of-the-way places where they hold, to a certain extent, their own in size and number, but this will continue only for a short time in the future.

The blue pike used to go in such immense schools as to destroy the bass fishing while on the grounds. They are a lazy fish on the hook compared with the former and afford little sport to the angler. They drive the bass away by their numbers and voracity, so that if he is not fishing for the market and wishes to continue his bass-fishing, he must change his locality. However, there is some excitement in pulling in two or three 10 or 15-pound pike, especially if you wish to see great expanse of glass eyes, extended gills, shark-like teeth, and a maw large enough to take in the fish himself, but it soon becomes more than work—monotonous.

The landing net was of my invention. The maker of it, often furnishing several for his customers, proposed to have it patented, to which I agreed, but unfortunately for us, on application to the Patent-Office, some one had been there for the same purpose ten years before us. The nets were identical, only mine had the best arrangement for attaching it to the handle.

It is rare to find the blue, yellow, goggle-eyed, wall-eyed, or white pike (all the same fish, *Lucioperca*, only variations of the same species, the result of difference in their surroundings, neither does the difference in structure amount to anything more, and perhaps not as much) on the market averaging more than 1½ pounds from the upper lakes, perhaps 2 pounds, and all scarce at that, 10 to 14 cents a pound undressed. Twenty-five years ago you could buy a 15-pound fish for a quarter of a dollar, and pay a good price at that.

CLEVELAND, OHIO, *May 27, 1884.*

116.—SPAWNING IN GERMANY OF THE LARGE-MOUTHED BLACK BASS SENT FROM THE UNITED STATES IN 1882.

By MAX VON DEM BORNE.

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

You will recollect that you kindly sent to me, in the fall of 1882, by Mr. George Eckerdt, 7 large-mouthed and 75 small-mouthed black bass. In consequence of the long passage the greater part of the lot died, so that I had this spring 3 large-mouthed old fish, and 10 small-mouthed two-year-old bass.

To-day I had the satisfaction of finding that the three large fish had spawned, and the pond actually swarms with fry. I have caught with a small net more than 2,000 and have put them into another pond which is free from other fish.

I have no doubt that next spring the small-mouthed bass will spawn, and that the experiment will be successful.*

BERNEUCHEN, GERMANY, *June 15, 1884.*

117.—TRANSPORTATION OF CLAMS AND OYSTERS,

By R. E. C. STEARNS.

[From a letter to Richards & Harrison, San Francisco, Cal.]

In reply to your question as to the best method for transporting clams and oysters, I would say as to clams that they are in my opinion more difficult to handle than oysters, and further, that the abundance of several varieties of clams on the west coast of America, from and in Puget Sound south along the coast at many points to San Diego, would not warrant the experiment.

* Another effort was made this year to send black bass to von dem Borne in charge of Captain Briand, of the French line of steamers from New York. Mr. Blackford delivered 40 bass, March 26, on the steamer with orders to leave them at the Havre Aquarium subject to order of von dem Borne. Unfortunately the fish all died at sea in transit.—C. W. S.