

## 148.—THE FISH OF LAKE CHAMPLAIN.

By C. HART MERRIAM, M. D.

[From a letter to Forest and Stream, published February 22, 1883.]

The principal market fish of Lake Champlain are:

Perch, *Perca americana*, Schranck.

Wall-eyed pike, *Stizostedium vitreum* (Mitch.), J. & C.

Black bass, *Micropterus salmoides* (Lac.), Henshall.

Pickrel, *Esox lucius*, L.

Lake shad, *Coregonus clupeiformis* (Mitch.), Milner.

Mullet, *Myxostoma macrolepidotum* (Le S.), Jord.

Bull-pout, *Amiurus vulgaris* (Thomp.), Nelson.

Eel, *Anguilla rostrata* (Le S.), DeKay.

Sturgeon, *Acipenser rubicundus*, Le Sueur.

The above list is not supposed to include all the food-fishes of the lake, but those that are commonly sold in the markets. Of these, the pike, black bass, pickrel, and "lake shad" are by far the most important, each averaging from 3 to 6 pounds in weight, and retailing at Plattsburg for 12½ cents per pound. A few bass are taken with the hook and line and some are speared; with this important exception all the market fish are caught in nets.

What is here known as "lake shad" is a true whitefish, equal in every respect to the whitefish of the Great Lakes. How it came by its local name I cannot imagine, unless, because of its superior flavor and the absence of shad in Lake Champlain, the early inhabitants thought they would do it honor by giving it the name of the most esteemed of the food-fishes of the world. It frequently attains the weight of 8 pounds, and individuals are sometimes taken that turn the scales at 10 and even 12 pounds.

The perch are small and sell for 10 cents per dozen. The mullet averages from 2 to 6 pounds in weight, though sometimes growing to be much larger, and retails for 6 cents per pound at Plattsburg. The bull-pout weighs a pound or a little over, and sells for 8 cents per pound, dressed, or 20 cents per dozen fish, undressed. The eels average from 2 to 5 pounds, and sell for 20 to 50 cents a piece.

The sturgeons weigh from 20 to 100 pounds each, and bring, at Plattsburg, 10 cents per pound, dressed, and 8 cents undressed. Many are speared every spring when they ascend the river to spawn. They run up the Missisquoi with great regularity about the 24th of May, but the dam at Swanton, Vt., prevents them from reaching their old spawning-beds; hence, after remaining less than forty-eight hours, they return to the lake. Whether the spawn is deposited on their way out I have been unable to ascertain. On the 24th of May last, a miller speared one from the bridge at Swanton that weighed 88½ pounds, measured 6 feet 1 inch in length, and contained a bucketful of spawn. Several others were killed in the shallow rapids under the bridge at this time. The next

morning sturgeon were seen sporting "like porpoises" in the deeper water below, after which they immediately returned to the lake. They occur at Swanton with such surprising regularity that many of the inhabitants keep spears in readiness for them, and I am told that they rarely vary more than a day or two in the time of their appearance.

The only fish markets of any importance on Lake Champlain are at Burlington, Vt., and Plattsburg, N. Y., the fish selling for a trifle less on the Vermont side. The hotels do not generally patronize the markets, but purchase direct from the fishermen. Practically, all the fish are taken in nets, and those caught after the latter part of April come mostly from certain parts of Grand Isle, which belongs to Vermont. In March and April seines are set to catch the fish upon and on their way to the spawning-beds. Last spring (1882) there were six large seines in the Missisquoi River below Swanton. Few escape to deposit their spawn. The same method is practiced in other rivers, and I am credibly informed that for a period of six weeks each spring from 30 to 40 barrels of fish are shipped daily from the north end of Lake Champlain alone. Most of them go to New York. Inquiries at Rouse's Point disclosed the significant fact that an average of 25 to 30 barrels pass through that place daily "for a period of at least five weeks in the months of March and April." In the spring of 1878, 20,000 pike died in a small pond in which they were placed to await "a raise" in the market price.

LOCUST GROVE, N. Y., *February 15, 1883.*

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**149.—A LANDLOCKED SALMON CAUGHT IN ERIE CANAL.**

**By WATTS T. LOOMIS.**

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

I have just received a line from Capt. L. A. Beardslee inclosing yours asking about the "California salmon" caught here. The fish was caught in the Erie Canal at this place, and was, according to Seth Green, a landlocked salmon. A large number of landlocked salmon were placed within two or three years past upon the headwaters of the Moose River, and the way here from there is easy.

A large number of California salmon were placed in the Mohawk at this place ten or more years ago, and so far as I know were never heard from. If they visited the sea they could not get back, as Cohoes Falls stands in the way.

LITTLE FALLS, N. Y., *May 28, 1884.*