

young oysters which set or become affixed seems to be relatively much greater. The take or set of spat in the best oyster coves or creeks does not seem to be generally so abundant, yet its growth, as the specimens figured show, is very rapid, far more so than that of the smaller, viviparous European edible oyster, but about equal to that of the oviparous Portuguese species.

WASHINGTON, D. C., *January 29, 1885.*

25.—REPORT OF A TRIP TO LONG ISLAND IN SEARCH OF SKELETONS OF THE RIGHT WHALE, *BALÆNA CISARCTICA.*

By FREDERICK W. TRUE,

Curator of Mammals, U. S. National Museum.

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

Following your instructions I went to Southampton, Long Island, on the 30th of January, to find out whether it would be possible to procure for the Museum the skeleton of one of the four whales reported to have been recently captured near that place. Upon arriving at Southampton, I found that the newspaper accounts were substantially correct and that four specimens of the Atlantic right whale (*Balæna cisarctica*) had been captured. The carcasses lay on the beach at the following points. One near Bridgehampton, one 3 miles east of the Southampton life-saving station, one 2½ west of the same, and one near the Amagansett station. The first was said to be a male and the others females. An agent of Mr. Ward's arrived at Southampton and took possession of the skeleton at Amagansett, and I did not therefore go to examine that specimen. I examined both of those near Southampton. The skull of that to the west had been hacked in pieces with axes and various parts were missing, so that it was of no value. The skull of the specimen lying to the east of the station I secured, but the skeleton had been washed out to sea. This specimen was not so large as some of the others, but the skull is in a good state. The latter is about 10 feet in length. I secured also a slab of whalebone through the kindness of Captain Herrick, who threw the fatal lance. The Bridgehampton specimen I could get no certain information about, and considering the condition of the others did not deem it warrantable to go to further expense.

The spoils of the expedition are, therefore, a skull, an eye, a slab of whalebone, and the "bonnet." The skull will be forwarded as soon as it is ascertained by what route it can be most economically sent.

Mr. Nelson Burnett, keeper of the Southampton Station, and his men

gave me valuable assistance. More whales have been seen on the coast, and we may yet succeed in getting a complete skeleton. I would suggest that it might be desirable to send a printed circular to the Long Island keepers requesting them to give the matter their special attention.

WASHINGTON, *February 5, 1885.*

**26.—NOTICE OF THE CAPTURE OF A MALE PYGMY SPERM WHALE
—KOGIA BREVICEPS—AT KITTY HAWK, NORTH CAROLINA.**

By FREDERICK W. TRUE.

The Commission may well congratulate itself upon the receipt by the Smithsonian Institution of a male pygmy sperm whale. The occurrence of this rare and interesting species in the Atlantic was made known for the first time by the capture of a specimen somewhat more than a year ago at Spring Lake, New Jersey. This first specimen was a female, and one can, therefore, understand the gratification those interested in the study of the Cetacea feel in receiving, as a second specimen, one of the opposite sex. The species is by no means well known, but of the few specimens captured the majority have been females. If I am not at error in my opinions, the male has been described as an animal of a genus and species distinct from the female.

The circumstances which attended the acquisition of the new specimen are set forth in the following letter addressed to Professor Baird by Mr. James R. Hobbs, keeper of the Kitty Hawk Life-saving Station, Sixth District, North Carolina, and dated January 1, 1885:

"I am sorry I was unfortunate with the fish, but I was determined to secure it. It came ashore during a gale of wind and a high tide and was badly chafed. On the next morning we had a snow storm. The fish came ashore $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles north of the station, and the patrol informed me that it was a porpoise. Accordingly, I sent three men with horse and cart for it, but as one of them had to hold the horse and the other two could not put it in the cart, they returned without it, and reported that it was a blackfish 9 feet long. The men pulled the fish upon the shore, and I had it covered with a light sail. On Sunday the gale abated, and I succeeded in carrying home the fish, which I identified as a pygmy sperm whale. While the whale was on the beach the sail blew off of its head, and the birds picked out one of its eyes. I did not get your telegram until the afternoon of Sunday. The gale detained the boat that runs here, so I boxed the specimen up and carried it in a small boat a distance of 5 miles to a fish-boat, and shipped it to Elizabeth City. I hope you will receive it all right. Like all other fish of its kind, handling causes the skin to peel off as the skin of a potato. This whale was badly skinned up.