Vol. V, No. 9. Washington, D. C. April 1, 1885.

24.—THE RATE OF GROWTH OF OYSTERS AT SAINT JEROME'S CREEK STATION.

By JOHN A. RYDER.

The following notes and illustrations may be of interest as showing the size to which oysters of an approximately known age may grow in a favorable situation within a comparatively short space of time. As already stated in former reports, it is not uncommon for spat to grow to the dimensions of 2 inches across in a single season.

The accompanying figures represent two specimens of oysters belonging to a lot which had attached themselves some time during the months of August and September, 1880, to collectors put down at Saint Jerome's Creek Station. The spat caught there that season on the slate and other collectors was detached and placed in a caisson to protect it from enemies, and left in the creek till 1882, when the writer in July of that year made some drawings of some of the oysters developed and protected as above described. This was approximately twenty-three months, or almost two years since the specimens had existed as free-swimming embryos in the waters of the creek.

In Figs. 1 and 2, the oysters, reared as above described, are represented. In both, the outline of the spat shell as it appeared at the end of the first year can be distinctly seen. In Fig. 1 this was about 1½ inches across at the end of the first year, when the growth of the shell was almost entirely suspended, but during the next eleven months the shells had been extended about 2 inches more from the hinge end, so that the growth made by the valves in two seasons had aggregated 3½ inches, reckoning from the hinge to the free borders of the valves opposite.

In Fig. 2 the rate of growth, it will be seen, was not so rapid during the second year, only about an inch more having been added during the second year to the extent of the valves of the spat shell of the first year, so that the rate of growth of the first and second seasons was about equal, the total length of the specimen being 2¼ inches.

Upon opening the specimen shown in Fig. 1, it was found in spawning condition at the time, or about the middle of July, 1882.

The change from the condition of attachment of the whole under surface of the whole lower or external face of the under valve after the first season's growth is abrupt; the edges of both valves, as the second year's growth of the shell is extended, are at once turned upwards obliquely to the plane of the surface of attachment, and thus freed, as may be plainly seen when the specimens figured here are viewed from the side.

These specimens are fairly representative of the late of growth of oysters in the coves along the Chesapeake, where the growth and multiplication of microscopic organisms is greatly favored. The growth of spat in more saline waters than those found in the best coves of the Chesapeake does not seem to be so rapid, but the number of individual

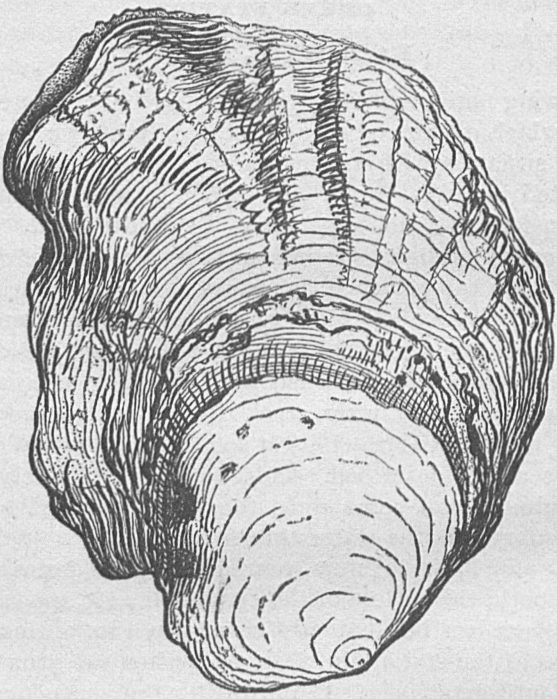

FIG. 1.

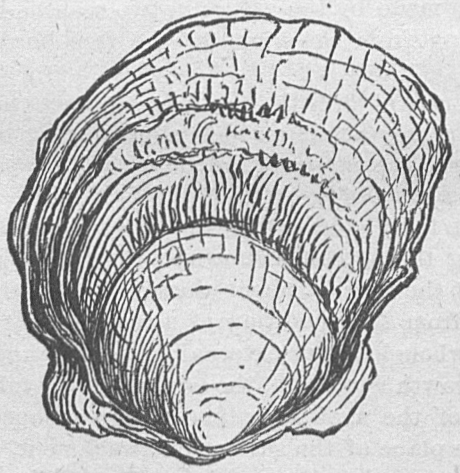

FIG. 2.

Figures illustrating the rate of growth of oysters in Saint Jerome's Creek.

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