

45.—ROCKFISH IN SOUTH CAROLINA.

By FRANK BURNS.

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

When I used to fish in the Santee River twenty years ago, old fishermen spoke of rockfish as having been caught there a long time before, but not within the last thirty-five or forty years, except at the junction of the clear water of Eutaw Creek with the muddy water of the Santee. There, it was said, they could be seen at all times of the year in the deep, clear water near the bottom, and were sometimes captured by gigs or spears on long poles. This information agreed with what I had heard of them in the Ohoopee, a small, clear tributary of the Altamaha River in Georgia.

As you are aware, most of our large Southern rivers are now muddy and filthy all the year, and scarcely any fish except catfish and eels can live in them. It was not always so, for they teemed with fish in my early boyhood. There is a class of rivers in the South that rise and run entirely in the cretaceous and tertiary sands, and the water is always comparatively clear, but is sometimes stained a dark color with vegetation. A local name for such streams is Black River, Black Creek, &c.

These streams abound with fish, being famous for shad and all the common fresh-water fish. I will mention a few of them in South Carolina and Georgia: Little Pedee, Waccamaw, Lynch's Creek, Black Creek, Catfish Creek, Black River, the Edisto (with its tributaries, Ashley, Cooper, Combahee, Salkehatchie, &c.) in South Carolina; the Ogeechee, Ohoopee, and Satilla (with its numerous tributaries) in Georgia. These are all clear-water streams, as contradistinguished from the Santee, Pedee, Savannah, and Altamaha Rivers, which are all large, long, muddy rivers rising in the Blue Ridge country and flowing over the clay slates of the metamorphic region.

Now I am informed that the rockfish, or striped bass, is found in all the clear-water streams enumerated, except the Satilla; I never heard of any in that stream, but in some cases they have to go up these large streams in order to get to the smaller clear streams, where they spawn. The spawning season seems to be in April and May, but the fish stay all summer and bite ravenously in October. They are caught in a few favored localities all the summer, sometimes rising to the fly or bob in the tributaries of the Pedee. They weigh sometimes as much as 40 pounds, one having been taken recently weighing 28 pounds.

It seems that the best point to get fish for spawning purposes is at the mouth of the Little Pedee River, where it empties into the Great Pedee above Georgetown, S. C. A Fish Commission steamer could prob-

ably ascend the river to near that point and anchor, while a tug would perhaps be necessary to operate with further. It seems that the Little Pedee is literally teeming with all kinds of fish. The country is poor, low, and unsettled, and the river seems to be a succession of lakes for a long distance. It is said that rockfish are here in great numbers, and are taken during April and May full of eggs.

While the mouth of the Little Pedee is so excellent a place for getting spawn, the Edisto also is a good stream for these fish, and so is the Ogeechee River, near Savannah. At the mouth of Black Creek, a stream that runs by Darlington and empties into the Great Pedee, is a favorite place to fish for rock, and so is a stream on the opposite side of the Pedee, in Marlborough County. Sometimes very large rockfish in considerable numbers are taken, in the spring of the year, by the shad fishermen in the Pedee and Waccamaw Rivers near Georgetown, S. C. Up the rivers in the brackish water the tide extends inland a long distance here.

It is a very gratifying fact that shad have been more plentiful in our Southern waters this year than for twenty-five years before. If this is due to the efforts of the U. S. Fish Commission, the poor people here (white and black) owe it a sincere debt of gratitude.

DARLINGTON C. H., S. C., *May 22, 1886.*

46.—FISH AND FISHING AT ABACO ISLAND.

By WILLARD NYE, Jr.

At this island fish abound. From boats the islanders catch margot, porgies, hogfish, &c., in four fathoms of water, while the groupers and large blackfish are taken in water seven or more fathoms deep. The men go to the fishing-grounds and with water-glasses hunt for a spot where the fish are seen swimming around, which is generally found away from the heavy growth of coral, and on some sand spot where a fine grassy fern-like gorgonian is scattered. For bait, conch or crawfish is used; the latter is most used, although the grouper seems to prefer a piece of fresh fish.

The fishermen generally fish with a water-glass in the left hand and the line in the right, until they have hooked a fish; this is because these fish often take the bait into their mouths without the fisherman being able to feel them with the line. I think a man would catch at least one-fourth more fish with a water-glass than without one. For the same reason (the light way in which the fish bite), a very short snood (from 2 to 5 inches long) is used on the hook and put on several inches above the sinker, so that a very slight pull may be felt. Considerable quantities of grunts, sailor's choice, &c.. are caught with hand-lines by men