

Genus 3.—*Mallotus*.Species 1.—*Mallotus villosus*—The Capelin.

This, the smallest species of the salmon family, inhabits the northern seas only, never ranging further south than the shores of New Brunswick. It is very nearly allied to the genus *osmerus*, from which however it differs in the smallness of its teeth, and in certain other particulars. Some naturalists have called this fish *salmo groenlandicus*, while others have classed it among the herring family. Cuvier has decided, that it belongs to the salmonidæ, to which it seems now settled it properly appertains.

The capelin is from 4 to 7 inches in length, the under jaw longer than the upper; the back and top of the head a dull leek green, with bright green and yellow reflections, when moved in the light; sides and belly covered with delicate and very bright silvery scales, which are dotted on the margins with black specks; the back covered with small smooth grains, like shagreen.

The manner in which the capelin deposits its spawn, is one of the most curious circumstances attending its natural history. The male fishes are somewhat larger than the female, and are provided with a sort of ridge, projecting on each side of their back bones, similar to the eaves of a house, in which the female capelin is deficient. The latter, on approaching the beach to deposit its spawn, is attended by two male fishes, who huddle the female between them, until the whole body is concealed under the projecting ridges, and her head only is visible. In this position, all three run together, with great swiftness, upon the sands, when the males, by some inherent imperceptible power, compress the body of the female between their own, so as to expel the spawn from an orifice near the tail. Having thus accomplished its delivery, the three capelins separate, paddling with their whole force through the shallow water or the beach, generally succeed in regaining once more the bosom of the deep; although many fail to do so, and are cast upon the shore, especially if the surf be at all heavy.

The Rev. Mr. Anspach, in his work on Newfoundland, thus describes the arrival of the capelin schull at Conception Bay, where he resided for some years:—

"It is impossible to conceive, much more to describe, the splendid appearance, on a beautiful moonlight night, at this time. Then, the vast surface of the Bay is completely covered with myriads of fishes, of various kinds and sizes, all actively engaged, either in pursuing or avoiding each other. The whales, alternately rising and plunging, throwing into the air spouts of water; the cod-fish, bounding above the waves, and reflecting the light of the moon from their silvery surface; the capelins, hurrying away in immense shoals, to seek a refuge on the shore, where each retiring wave leaves multitudes skipping upon the sand, an easy prey to the women and children, who stand there with barrows and buckets, ready to seize upon the precious and plentiful booty; while the fishermen in their skiffs, with nets made for that purpose, are industriously engaged in securing a sufficient quantity of this valuable bait for their fishery."

Like the common smelt, the capelin possesses the cucumber smell; but it differs from the smelt in never entering fresh water streams.