

# Ontario Fishery Commission.

## BLUE PICKEREL AND VORACIOUS FISHES.

The phenomenal increase, as shown by the catch, of voracious and coarse fish in Lake Erie, may be attributed to exceptional causes, by the somewhat warmer water in that shallow lake, and the weedy nature of many of the bays and shores. This lake at one time abounded in whitefish and salmon-trout. The returns of the Department of Fisheries in 1892, show that not one salmon-trout was caught, while during the last ten years, the pickerel catch, mainly blue pickerel, increased 477 per cent, pike, 413 per cent, and other coarse fish, 223 per cent. Twelve tons of blue pickerel have been lifted in one day in four pound-nets. (See Emery's, Port Burwell, evidence.)

The brook pickerels (*Esox Americanus* and *Esox umbrosus*) are well known. These two small pickerel are very abundant—the former in the coastwise streams, east of the Alleghanies—the latter in the Mississippi basin. Neither reaches the length of much over a foot, and from their voracity they are undesirable inmates of streams and lakes. The average weight of the blue pickerel of Lake Erie is one pound, and it may be a development of one or other of the above-named pickerels. The fry of the young whitefish from the spawning grounds at the west end of Lake Erie and Detroit River are carried by the currents to the deeper waters in the middle and at the east end of the lake. It is there the blue pickerel are to be found. They go in shoals and feed upon the fry of the more marketable fish. Fifty and even sixty small fish have been taken from the stomach of one blue pickerel. This fish is little known west of Point Pelee, is not known in Lake Ontario, nor is this species as developed in Lake Erie known in any of the western lakes. At the Detroit International Fisheries Conference an opinion was expressed that the pickerel was a fish which should be "cleaned out of Lake Erie." The pike and the coarser fish which have also so largely increased in Lake Erie are voracious and destructive to all other kinds of little fish.

In Lake Huron and the Georgian Bay there is evidence of the ravages of the lamprey eel, from their marks being found upon the bodies of the whitefish and other fish when caught. This eel inhabits Lake Ontario in vast numbers. At Kempfenfeldt Bay on Lake Simcoe,—the dog-fish have so increased in numbers that a Barrie fisherman has applied for a dog-fish license—the fish is almost worthless, yet they are saleable in some American cities where penury compels their use as food. In Lake Simcoe whitefish and salmon-trout are so nearly extinct, that complete suspension of net-fishing is advocated in that locality.

The dog-fish is classed as one of the most voracious and worthless fish in our waters—fishermen call them lawyers.

Nature's balance having been disturbed by the greed of man in the various lakes will account in a great measure for these unpleasant phenomena.

## 4.—FISHING IN THE SPAWNING SEASON.

Almost without exception, the fishermen examined expressed the opinion that owing to the loss of nets during November it would be better in the end, and more profitable to the fishermen to take up their nets and stop fishing at the end of October "if all did it." The few that were adverse to the November close season