

Canadian Natural History.

The Black Bass.

(*Gristes Nigricans*)

IN the Natural History department of the CANADA FARMER for the 1st of January, we gave a brief account of the family of Perches, and an illustration of the largest of Canadian species, the Striped Sea Bass. The same general characteristics of the family apply to the species next in importance, the Black Bass, represented in the accompanying engraving, for which we are indebted to "Frank Forester's Fish and Fishing." From the same work we extract the following account of the appearance and habits of this well-known Canadian fish:

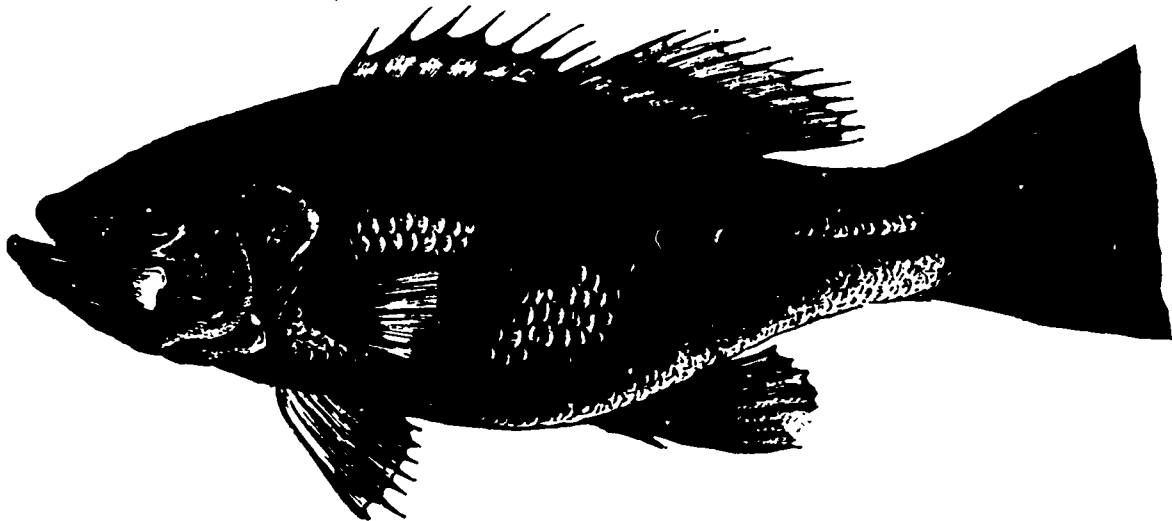
This is one of the finest of the American fresh-water fishes; it is surpassed by none in boldness of biting, in fierce and violent resistance when hooked, and by a very few only in excellence upon the board.

Peculiar originally to the basin of the St. Lawrence, in which it abounds from the Falls of Niagara downward, if not through its whole course, it has made its way into the waters of the upper Hudson, through the canals. It is said by Dr. DeKay to be found generally in the small lakes of the State of

ated. Scales on the operculum large; a single series on the suboperculum, much smaller on the preoperculum, ascending high up on the membrane of the soft dorsal and caudal fins. Eyes large; nostrils double. Operculum pointed, with a loose membrane. The lower jaw is somewhat longest. The jaws are smooth and scaleless. Both jaws are armed with a broad patch of minute conic acute reserved teeth. An oblong patch of rasp-like teeth on the vomer, and a band of the same kind on the palatines. Branchial arches minutely toothed. Pharyngeal teeth in rounded patches.

The dorsal fin is composed of nine stout spines, the second dorsal of one spine and fourteen soft rays. The pectorals have eighteen soft rays, the ventrals one spine and five soft rays, the anals three spines, and twelve soft rays, and the caudal sixteen soft rays.

It is somewhat doubtful to me whether the fish known in the waters of Lake Erie and those generally above the Falls, as the Oswego Bass, is not distinct from this fish, though it is also occasionally called Black Bass. There is very evidently some confusion about the matter, as I am well assured that another fish of the same family, the *Corrina Oscula*, is at times confounded with it, and called by the same name, though in truth it but slightly resembles it. During a tour recently through the great lakes, I had abundant opportunities of learning the



New York, but I conclude that this must be limited to those which communicate with the great lakes or the St. Lawrence. It is taken abundantly in Lake Champlain, but it is in the swift glancing waters of the St. Lawrence, among the exquisite scenery of the Thousand Islands, that it affords the greatest sport to the angler.

It bites ravenously at a small fish or spinning-tackle, or at the deadly and murderous spoon, an instrument so certainly destructive that the use of it is properly discouraged by all true anglers as poaching and unsportsmanlike.

The finest sport can be had, however, with a long light Salmon-line, treble-twisted gut, to defy its numerous and exceeding acute teeth, and a large fly, with a body of scarlet chenil and four wings, two of the silver pheasant and two of the scarlet ibis. As the Black Bass attains to the weight of six or eight pounds, and is excelled in vigor, speed and agility only by the brook Trout, the Salmon Trout and the True Salmon, the sport which he affords when thus hooked can be very readily imagined; nor can he be brought to the basket by anything short of the best tackle, and the most delicate and masterly manipulation.

In colour, the fish is of a dusky bluish black, sometimes with bronze reflections, the under parts bluish white, the cheeks and gill-covers nacreous of a bluish color.

The body is compressed. Back arched and gibbous. Profile descending obliquely to the rostrum, which is moderately prolonged. Scales large, trun-

habits of this fish, which swarms in all the Canadian lakes, though not found north of them. It is taken in Seneca, Crooked, and Cayuga Lakes, and in the first is of rare excellence. I lean to the opinion that the differences between this and the Oswego Bass arise merely from difference of condition and feeding-grounds.

Early Birds.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER:

SIR,—On the 15th of April, while spreading manure on some meadow land, I was surprised to find a nest of young birds, almost full fledged. The parent birds had dug a hole in some cow-droppings, and there built their nest, and to-day I visited the place, and found the young, three in number, hopping about on the ground. Now, Sir, the eggs must have been laid not later than the first week in March, during some of the coldest weather we have had during the winter. I should like to know how the parent birds managed to get through the snow to build their nest, and how they managed to keep their eggs from freezing, before the period of incubation. They must have been on the nest from the time the first egg was laid, almost incessantly, for we have had weather cold enough, since the first of March, to freeze such a tiny thing as an egg through in five minutes. These and similar thoughts have passed through my mind frequently since the first time I saw the early fledged birds. What a wonderful thing instinct is, which teaches these feathered songsters to take such care of their eggs and young! and these are but a small part of the Creator's works, the minutest of which, if attentively examined, discloses a thousand wonders, and obliges us to adore and admire the Omnipotent Hand that created them.

GEORGE DOIDGE.

Edgecombe Farm, Columbus,
April 20th, 1868.

The Woodcock.

To the Editor of THE CANADA FARMER:

SIR,—As you seem to be devoting much attention in imparting to the youth of Canada a knowledge of its very interesting ornithology, I am induced to bring under your notice an instance of early nesting, on which I stumbled while, on the 10th inst., crossing the corner of Mr. Price's sugar bush in the fifth concession of Camden. The rareness of the instance is an additional reason why I am desirous to bring it under your notice, and that of the readers of the CANADA FARMER. The nest was that of a female woodcock—built on the ground, under the branches of a low balsam tree, and entirely covered from view. The eggs were four in number, of a greenish ash colour, dappled with irregular brown spots. The weather was very cold, the ground having been covered with snow for nearly a week. The eggs must have been laid during the warm weather at the beginning of this month. It seemed to be close hatching, as it was quite tame, and when raised from the nest retired only a short distance from it. Whether it could in such unfavourable circumstances communicate sufficient heat to hatch the eggs, I have no means of knowing, as I left that part of the country soon after I dis-

covered the nest. This was the first instance of the woodcock I have seen in Canada. Indeed I was not aware that it was found on this continent at all. It seems to be much smaller than the Scottish woodcock, and, as is the case with the snipe, and some other long-billed birds, its bill is shorter. In the north of Scotland, where I have been familiar with it, it is a bird of passage, making its appearance in November and the beginning of December, and leaving early in the spring for Norway, Sweden, and other parts of northern Europe. It very rarely breeds in Scotland. I never knew an instance of it myself, but I was told by a friend of mine that it sometimes remained all summer in the Forests of Glenmore and other places, on the northern slopes of the Grampians. It is always a very shy bird, and lives in low coppices and near marshes. It is erroneously said to live by suction, like the snipe, yet, unlike that bird, it never wades or frequents marshes or exposed places without wood or brush. It ranks high as a game bird, but is very difficult to bring down, from its angular movements, as well as quick flight. I am informed that the lighthouses of the northern coasts of Scotland prove fatal to large numbers of them on their way to that country. Whether they travel by night, or are benighted in crossing the German Ocean, I do not know; but it is well known that the light attracts them as if by fatal necessity, and, in their swift flight they dash against the lantern, and drop down dead.

DUNCAN DAVID GOW

Cambray, April 22, 1868.