

THE OTTAWA NATURALIST.

VOL. XIX.

OTTAWA, MARCH, 1906.

No. 12

THE EGGS OF THE FRESH-WATER LING.

By Professor E. E. PRINCE and ANDREW HALKETT, Marine and Fisheries Department, Ottawa.

The discovery of the eggs of the burbot or fresh-water ling (*Lota maculosa*, LeSueur) deposited by the parent fish, exhibited in the tanks of the Ottawa Fisheries Museum, is a matter of unusual scientific interest.* While the burbot is not a valuable or esteemed species, it is, in many ways, an interesting fish to the naturalist. It is known in different parts of Canada by no less than fifteen different names,† most of them uncomplimentary; indeed, as the late Frank Buckland said, many years ago, of the British burbot or burbolt, "they are such a stupid and ugly fish that I cannot advise trouble to be taken with their dissemination . . . they are so destructive to the eggs of all other fish . . . they eat an enormous quantity of fry, and they swim after the manner of eels." The same author stated that they are a nocturnal fish, spawn in the deepest holes in lakes, 480 to 540 feet deep, and after having been frozen stiff will revive. Belonging, as the burbot does, to the family *Gadidae*, which includes the cod, haddock, hake, whiting, and other valuable food fishes, it might be imagined that it is excellent as a table fish. Of its edible qualities the most opposite opinions are held. On some lakes of the Northwest it is highly regarded; but in other localities, indeed generally, it is not regarded with favor, and has been even pronounced poisonous. In this connection, the following extract from a special report, published in the Blue Book of the Marine and Fisheries Department, 1900, has an interest and may be appropriately quoted here (*vide* report mentioned pp. lv-lvi).

*The eggs were collected by Mr. Andrew Halkett for study in a fresh living condition, while others were preserved by him in formalin.