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QUESTIONS RELATING TO MACKEREL, USED AT YARMOUTH AND LUNENBERG, N.S., MAY AND JUNE, 1895, BY WM. WAKEHAM AND R. RATHBUN.

When do the mackerel first strike this part of the coast? (Has he any records).

Describe the different schools that come in, and the size and period of each.

How far north do the spring mackerel strike in? (Maitland, St. Mary's Bay, Digby).

How do they strike the shore? Broad on, from the north, or how? What direction do they move? What evidence is there to show that they do not also move north?

How about movements at Pubnico, Barrington and Shelburne?

How far off Yarmouth do they take mackerel with gill nets? In what direction are those mackerel moving?

If mackerel are taken on the gill net grounds off shore, do they not move directly on the shore, and why should one trap interfere with the catch of another?

Do mackerel of the first or second run

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ever spawn here?

Do any mackerel run here in the summer and fall sizes?

How about St. Mary's Bay?

How about Digby and other places in Bay Fundy?

Where are brush weirs located in this part of Nova Scotia? For what are they set?

Are traps set specially for any fish but mackerel? No.

Description and sizes of traps.

Where are they located and number between Maitland and Shelburne?

When did they begin to use traps?

On what part of the coast do the traps do best fishing?

History of trap fishing, when were there most. How has reduction come about, and are the few now in use preferable to the larger number? Why?

What was used before traps?

History, sizes, mesh, etc., of seines?

How many were in use?

Where were seines used?

Did they make as good catches as traps?

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Why were they given up?

History of gill netting, when did they begin? What has been number at different times in past; and at present?

Description of gill nets.

Seasons.

Places where used.

Comparative quality of catch.

When was mackerel fishery first taken up in this region; what has been its general history? Has anything been published on the subject?

When did they begin to ship mackerel fresh? What did they do before that?

Can we obtain statistics of mackerel fishery here in Yarmouth?

Can we rely upon the reports of the Boston Fish Bureau?

What is salmon season in traps?

How many are taken here every spring?

What sizes do they run?

What is done with them?

To what river do they belong?

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Isn't there a large waste of small fish in the traps? Cod, pollock, etc. Could these not be thrown overboard in pursing the trap?

In all of this region are the poles to the traps always set in stones, or do they have soft bottom in places where they drive them?

What depth water should there be in the bowl at low tide.

Do they purse the traps early enough each season to know they are catching the first mackerel?

At what time are the traps taken up between Maitland and Shelburne?

If left in later than the mackerel season, for what purpose?

Are any mackerel gibbed or salted now in this region?

What has been the relative catch of mackerel during the past few years?

What causes yearly fluctuations in catch of mackerel?

Are mackerel as abundant as ever?

Does purse seining have any effect upon

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their abundance here? Or does it interfere with their fishery in any way?

Why isn't the Yarmouth Bar trap set on a point instead of in a cove?

What are the shipping ports for Boston? What territory is tributary to each?

At what places in Bay Fundy do spring mackerel occur?

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GEORGE CHURCHILL, YARMOUTH, N.S.

MAY 28, 1895

Interviewed by Wm. Wakeham and R. Rathbun (long hand).

Owens the Bluff Pt. trap, which has done the best this year. 40 years old. Has fished for mackerel since he was a boy. Has fished traps during the past 10 years.

At his trap gets the first mackerel May 13 to 16. Have been years when they have taken 1 or 2 mackerel as early as May 9.

The way it generally runs is this: The first day they may get anywhere from 2 to 10 mackerel; the second day increases to 100 to 150; possibly the third day will get as good a catch as any of the first run, sometimes as many as 60 to 100 barrels.

This year (1895) on May 15 shipped 260 mackerel; May 18, 164 barrels (60 in a bbl.); May 22, 415 bbls. (70 in a bbl.); on May 23 caught 500 bbls. (70 in a bbl.) half of which were shipped May 25, and the remainder May 27. This is up to date of interview.

In 1894 shipped as follows: May 16, 87

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mackerel; next boat, 150 mackerel; next boat, 60 bbls. (75 to a bbl.); next boat, 81 bbls.; May 30, 151 bbls.; next boat, 40 bbls.; next boat 20 bbls.; next boat 10 bbls. The second run did not come on in 1893, but continued to take mackerel in small quantities up to the middle of June. These were practically all large mackerel during this season, with a little sprinkling of the sizes belonging to the second run, but not many of them. Waited for the second run until the end of June, but it did not appear.

The mackerel are not weighed here, but in Boston by the Custom's officers. They select a few from each lot to weigh, by which the total weight of each lot is figured up. Of the larger fish they get a smaller weight in a bbl. than of the smaller mackerel, as the former do not pack so snugly. A fair general average of the weight of mackerel in a barrel may be placed at 140 lbs.

The first mackerel which appear are all large. After the head of the school is passed by there is some intermingling of smaller

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mackerel down to 13 ½ inches, such as we saw in the mackerel being repacked here for the Boston boat on May 25. Only a very few of the 13 ½.

Many of the mackerel this year (1895) weighed 2 ½ lbs. These large ones were 2 inches longer than the diameter of the top of the barrel. In 1893 had very much the same sizes at first. Got the first that year about May 15. The large mackerel of the first run are more apt to range from 13 ½ to 15 inches. 13 ½ is the smallest of No. 1, and may not be accepted as such unless they are mixed in with larger ones.

The first run of mackerel ends about May 30, sometimes earlier, sometimes a little later. There is always some interval between the first and second run. It is usually 3 or 4 days, but may be

longer. They may have 2 runs in June. Toward the end of June the fish may drop to a smaller size, and this, in fact, may be almost the beginning the summer run, or the fish correspond in size.

The mackerel of the second run range from

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12 to 15 inches. This run is more apt to be a large one than the first, and some years is very much larger. 1893 and 1894 were poor years for the second run, and in both of these years they had none of the third spring run, that is to say the one occurring the latter part of June. Have always counted in the past on the second run for making their largest catches.

Thinks that the May and June runs of fish always strike in the water off the western end of Nova Scotia, and that their appearance on or absence from the shore is due to the wind. An easterly wind keeps the mackerel off shore, and they may pass down without coming within the reach of the fishing apparatus, or only so to a slight extent.

Thinks the influence of the wind is not directly on the fish, but upon the food, which may be blown on or off the shore. When the mackerel are on the shore they invariably find the feed there also in abundance.

Mackerel will feed on something up under the large jelly fishes. Has seen a number of

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mackerel around such a jelly (sun squall), when suddenly one would dart at and apparently through it, followed by another, another, etc., in succession. They seem to be timid about it in the beginning, but when one has made the attempt the others follow in quick succession.

In February, 1893, a fisherman in his employ was lobstering in St. Mary's Bay, and while there he saw a school of fish which he is confident were mackerel. They were at the surface off Dulcet Head. The bay is very muddy bottom, and Mr. Churchill thought the mackerel might have wintered there in the mud.

Bluff Pt. trap has a wide opening into the heart only on the north side. On the south side there is only a ten foot opening for the passage of a boat. He is confident all the mackerel enter the traps from the north.

The John's Island traps take spring mackerel about 2 days later than the traps between Yarmouth Bar and Maitland. The spring mackerel are certainly always moving south and east.

The first run of mackerel come in toward

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the shore just south of Gull Rock, off St. Mary's Bay. That is at least the northern limit of the schools, as they come in toward the shore. This run has been seen sometimes on Grand Manan Bank and Bryer Island Ledge. The most northern point they strike on the main shore is about Black Pt.

The second run moves about the same except that a few may be taken in St. Mary's Bay.

About 17 years ago the mackerel fishery was a great failure, and since then many have gone to lobstering who would otherwise engage in mackerel fishing (These are probably the gill netters). The lobstering is more certain, and they do well at it.

The first trap set in this region was by B.F. Kinney, on John's Island about 15 or 16 years ago. The Yarmouth Bar trap was set the next year.

13 years ago there was a very large body of mackerel on this shore, and the run was continuous from the date when first taken in May until June 25 or July 1.

Clark's Harbor, on Cape Island, is the

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location of the most eastern of the large trap nets. Farther east (about Lunenburg, etc.), they have summer or floating traps, which are quite different.

There are small brush traps in Pubnico Bay and Harbor, Lobster Bay and Chebogue River, which take summer mackerel.

The brush weirs in St. Mary's Bay extend from the north side of Sissibou River to the head of the bay on the south side. They take herring, shad and summer mackerel.

The number of mackerel trap nets owned in St. Mary's Bay is 5, 3 on the south side and 2 on the north. None of these were set last summer as there were no mackerel then in the summer. They had been fished for several years previously, however. Out of the past 7 seasons they have made 3 failures in that mackerel fishery, two of them being serious failures.

When Mr. Churchill started in, in 1884, his traps made the 12th on the shore between Cape Sable and Maitland. That large number of traps was very bad, as one cut the other off,

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and the present number, 4, is decidedly the best.

Connected with his trap, which has 2 hearts, are 75 anchors, averaging in weight about 300 lbs. each.

The spring of 1894 was the first for 10 years that Halifax fish reached Boston before Yarmouth fish. Fish struck east earlier.

Thinks that ordinarily the bulk of the first 2 runs strikes at the west end of Nova Scotia, and it is only accidentally that they do not.

The spring fish only school when going with the tide, which is ebb, going south.

Never saw any mackerel spawning about here.

Summer mackerel drift and school with the tides. They seem to be going in no particular direction.

They consider best prospect for a catch of summer mackerel off this coast when they are first reported at Lobster Bay and Seal Island Ground. They come in about the middle of July and follow up the shore to St. Mary's Bay.

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Mackerel reported in Bay of Fundy seldom get into St. Mary's Bay. When going south in November from Bay of Fundy they may pass through Grand Passage.

There is a sprinkling of summer mackerel all along the shore from Tusket Islands to St. Mary's Cape. At that time the fishermen are using gill nets for herring along this coast, and they may take the mackerel in small quantities.

Never get the large mackerel, such as compose the first spring run, in the fall here.

Do not fish for mackerel in Bay of Fundy, and so little is known as to size and presence of mackerel there. It is possible that some of the large ones may go up there in the spring, but there is no apparatus set that would indicate their presence. The mackerel that come down through Grand Passage in November are large.

Mackerel generally stay in St. Mary's Bay until about November 1. Have been known to remain there later, if no heavy gales occur.

In St. Mary's Bay, besides the traps, and

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weirs, they use drag seines, gill nets, and hooks and lines.

Does not think the mackerel have decreased. Purse seining has the effect of dividing the schools into smaller bodies.

Purse seiners, on the early spring grounds at the south, do not get the large fish, but generally the second run.

On May 29, Churchill took out 90 bbls. of mackerel in his Bluff Pt. trap; the other traps about Yarmouth took very few. Does not know size of these mackerel, whether first or second run. (W.A. Zwicker, Lunenburg, N.S., May 30, 1895).

The bowls of traps are generally 100 to 120 feet across. His bowl (Bluff Pt. trap) is 60 x 115 feet. He has 2 hearts. The outer heart is practically a bowl with door, and pursing arrangement. 2 inch mesh in bowl, 4 inch in leader, 3 inch in outer heart, 4 inch in inner heart (Churchill).

