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Page 115 [1]

Gloucester, Mass.

Capt. John A. McKinnon.

Interviewed by William Wakeham, Richard Rathbun, and Hugh M. Smith.

Nov. 22, 1893

Master of Schooner Norembega. Has been 17 years mackerel fishing with the seines.

The southern fishery began before his time. The first spring he went south was 18 years ago, and they went quite a number of years before that. Has been south every year since that time, with the exception of the last three years.

Most always find the fish down in about latitude 37°. Has seen them a little further south than that; as far as Body Island. It looks as though the mackerel come out of the gulf stream north of Cape Hatteras. Does not think there is a great body of fish further south.

The fish strike in all along the coast from the

Page 116 [2]

direction of the gulf stream from near Hatteras to Cape Canso. The reason why he thinks so; there is a distance of 300 odd miles from Cape Sable to Cape Canso, and it is a matter of about 24 hours from the time they catch the first fish at Cape Sable until they catch them at the Magdalen's, and we know that the fish cannot go that fast. The average rate of the fish is about 4 miles an hour.

See the fish in the southern waters first just on the edge of the soundings. Thinks they do not show off the soundings. Thinks some of the southern fish go as far north as into the St. Lawrence River. They spread out. Around Cape Breton they branch out every

Page 117 [3]

way. No doubt some of them go way up in the Labrador coast.

Thinks a proportionate part of the mackerel stop when they find a place that suits them. They stop for feed. Used to be a good many fish go up through the South Channel but has not seen them much of late years. Last year a large body of fish came through there. The fish which strike the Massachusetts coast he thinks go around over Georges. Those fish which come up around Boston Bay and the Maine coast must come up through the South Channel. The fish that go over

the southeast part of Georges he thinks go on the shore near Cape Sable, which splits them, a part going into the Bay

Page 118 [4]

of Fundy and a part following the Cape Shore.

Find the first schools of fish on Brown's Bank, about the 1st to the 10th of May. And they would be found at Cape North about the 25 or 26 of May; that is, 2nd and 3rd of June the bodies go along. These scattering ones would go three or four days before the main body. On the 12th of June saw lots of fish going up toward the Gulf. There are two schools of fish which enter the Gulf, the first being larger fish and distributing themselves generally over the Gulf, while the latter remain about the Magdalen's and Prince Edward Island, etc. The smaller fish leave before the large

Page 119 [5]

ones. The small fish leave from the first of October on. It depends upon the weather a good deal. The fish work to the westward, going out the same as they go in. If the wind is off the land and nice weather the fish will turn the land very close, but if the wind is on shore they keep off. The best fishing on the Cape Shore is very close in shore, from 10 to 20 miles off.

He followed a single school at one time, about 5 years ago, for about 6 miles and gave it up. Cannot follow a single school any great distance.

There is a patch of ground off the Delaware Breakwater where the fish used to lay and feed a spell. This year they lay there a little while.

Page 120 [6]

The fish ought to be out of the Gulf of St. Lawrence about the last of November. They might catch a very few into December, but not many. Has caught fish there himself the 8th of November. That is the latest he has ever caught them there. Got fish north of Scatteri this year on the 7th of November. They were going out of the Gulf. After leaving the Gulf, the fish are on the Cape Shore only a few days at the most, and passing along. If the water is all right they may trim the shore as far as Cape Sable. Some may go directly to the gulf stream. Has never followed them out to sea, but along the shore.

The latter part of September the fish begin to work west. There was

Page 121 [7]

a tremendous body of fish in the Bay of Fundy and in August they left and went out S.S.E. to sea to the eastward of Georges. In old times they used generally to begin to leave the latter part of September and work slowly up west by Cape Cod. This large body of fish which were found late this year in Massachusetts Bay, he thinks came in from sea. They were not seen before anywhere

in the Gulf of Maine. It has been reported that there were fish on Georges during the summer, and that may have been the body of fish that came in so abundantly in the fall.

Mackerel have lots of enemies. The blue fish is a very bad one, and there are porpoises, sword fish, whales, gannets, squids, and albacores. They

Page 122 [8]

destroy very many fish. Nine tenths of the fish that are destroyed are destroyed by these enemies, and not more than 1/10 by man.

Sometimes catch mackerel, and squid with them, and when we get fish about half squid and half mackerel, two-thirds of the mackerel would be disfigured; the squid would take a piece right out of them, and it disfigures them so we cannot put them on the market. That happens about all over the grounds, depending upon the season of the year, etc. Considers squid one of the most destructive enemies to the mackerel.

Last year the blue fish got into the bays inside of the mackerel and drove them off to sea earlier than they would have gone otherwise. This was about

Page 123 [9]

the latter part of September. It was all along the coast down as far as Grand Manan.

Gannets eat a good many mackerel. Find the gannets with them in the spring from Body Island, the earliest fishing, and they follow them right along. They go on into the Gulf.

In the southern waters the sea geese are considered an indication of the presence of mackerel. These birds feed upon the food of the mackerel, not upon the mackerel. Gulls do not feed upon mackerel.

The fish school about the same when they leave the coast as when they come on, but they do not show quite as much, the weather being colder and more strong.

The temperature of the water makes some difference with the movements of the fish north in the spring, but when it comes

Page 124 [10]

time for them to move along they go up nearly the same time; may vary a day or two, but that is about all.

When the fish get down to a cold temperature it causes them to spawn further south than they would if the water was warm. Has been in the Gulf as early as the 25th of May. The earliest he has seen fish in the Gulf was the 3rd of June, but saw no ice there then. The furthest south he has seen the fish in the fall is Cape Cod, but others have reported fish as far south as off New York.

He went as far as that one fall, but got no fish. But when they went in near the land to take the fish on their way south they heard that the fish were going south broad off from the land and

Page 125 [11]

he got none.

The Captain spoke of the great uncertainty of finding mackerel. May be on the watch for them for two or three weeks. He has cruised for three months over the same ground without seeing them, and then they would come up all of a sudden with no indication of where they came from.

Has known of fish being taken in March, about the 15th.

Has seen tinker mackerel in the stomachs of codfish on Georges in the winter. In Fortune Bay, in December, has taken a few scattering mackerel among the herring; about a peck of them out of 40 barrels of herring. When those small fish are leaving the coast undoubtedly they fall in with

Page 126 [12]

these herring and get mixed in with them.

The furthest off shore he has ever seen mackerel was 90 miles off the Cape Shore, south from Cape Sable. Saw a school of them there in the night. Those fish go over the southeast part of Georges, about 140 or 150 miles off Cape Sable. That would be the nearest land.

The best fishing he ever saw was any where from Cape Cod to Grand Manan, but there is no best fishing of late years. The whole coast was alive with fish in old days. He considers that of late years people who have kept on this coast have done the best, but he has obtained the best results in English waters during the last 8 or 9 years.

Page 127 [13]

Mackerel are generally mixed in schools. Do not seem exactly the same size. There are certain schools in certain localities that are pretty much the same. Tinkers will associate with the large fish, and the large fish feed on them to a certain extent. Has taken young mackerel probably 5 or 6 inches along out of the stomachs of larger mackerel; taken off Sidney, there being as many as 5 or 6 in the stomach of a single fish.

The last fish he caught, their stomachs were chock full of sand fleas. Between P.E.I. and Cape Breton, especially, all this year the stomachs of mackerel were filled with the red food during about all the season.

Thinks there are as

Page 128 [14]

many large fish in the schools now as there were when they began fishing.

Mackerel feed some when they are spawning. They go down below the surface when they spawn. Thinks they go to the bottom when they spawn. They will remain down three weeks sometimes. They are very dull, logy, and sick about that time.

Mackerel spawn all the way from down south clean up as far north as they go. Never saw spawn running from mackerel in the southern fishery. All bodies of fish do not spawn at the same time. In some the spawn would be ripe, and others it would be hard. They spawn in the Gulf of St. Lawrence in June. The latter part of June and in July the fish will show in

Page 129 [15]

schools, indicating that they have deposited their spawn, but could not say that some do not spawn in July. Has seen them with spawn in them in July and August in the Gulf, just scattering ones. Around Block Island they spawn about in May. On this coast they spawn about the same time. Considers that June is the ground spawning month. Does not think there has been any decrease in the quantity. He thinks the fish do not show alike every year, and therefore the catches will vary, but has no evidence to show that they have decreased. Has seen as many mackerel this year as he ever has in his life. The fish have not shown, or come onto the coast

Page 130 [16]

during the last 6 or 7 years, which accounts for the light catch during that time. He caught, in all, 6,000 or 7,000 fish south this year.

Thinks there should be no regulation regarding the purse seine fishery at any time. Does not think it has been any injury to the fish at all. Does not think the fish need any protection before they spawn. Thinks other fish destroy a good deal more than are destroyed by man.

Does not think the close season did any good. Never saw so few fish south as he saw this year. That law was passed because some of these people thought they would increase supply, but, you know, we are all liable to mistakes. They

Page 131 [17]

hoped to increase the supply by not catching the spawning fish. The idea of that is this; if they are going to stop people from catching these mackerel before they spawn, there will be nobody to catch them at all; because unless we can catch them in the spring, we cannot get them at all to amount to much. Cannot afford to fish if they only have a few weeks to catch them in.

Does not see that it makes any difference whether the mother fish are caught with the purse seine or with the traps. It is just as bad to catch them in the traps as it is with the purse seine.

Might not take as many with the hook and line. They will not take the

Page 132 [18]

hook as well in the spring. Never caught them well in the spring with the hook and line in the southern waters, but used to take some. For the last 10 years, all but one, we found these small mackerel in the Gulf waters that are that year's spawn. Find them in abundance, but failed to find out where they go. But the next year do not find these same fish that should be a year older. Mackerel grow quite fast the first year. Grow to 5 inches before leaving the Gulf. Knows of one man who has caught 11 barrels of those small fish and sold them for \$11 a barrel. About 1700 or 1800 in a barrel. They make chowder out of them down south. These are what they call

Page 133 [19]

penny fish.

Ten inch mackerel this year brought \$1.50 or \$2.00 a barrel,- as much as the larger fish. He caught mackerel at the Magdalen's this year that 110 or 112 of them made a barrel.

The spring fishery is done at a loss to some people, but he never lost anything in it, but a large majority would lose. People in this country always take their chances.

These vessels cost \$11,000 or \$12,000 with seines and two boats, and if I commission a vessel and take no quantity of fish, it is going to cost considerable money.

He has made money at the southern fishery. Has been down there 18 springs. The only spring he did not get any fish he picked up a three-master that was wrecked.