

STRIPED BASS IN SUMMER-ADIRONDACK FISHING

By WILLIAM C. HARRIS

THE month of August with very many anglers is in reality the opening of the fishing season, since it is then that vacation days first give time for angling. Independent of the delightful climatic conditions usually existing, all the esteemed rod fish are now eager for the lure, and are, as a rule, more numerous than in the earlier months. When the spring is backward, as it has been this year, many fish, particularly those of salt water that ordinarily come to us in April and May, are at their best in the late summer.

On our eastern coast the rivers and creeks of Maryland and Virginia affluent and confluent with the Chesapeake Bay are the best striped bass waters, the fish running larger in size and in greater numbers than elsewhere to my knowledge. They are frequently taken on rod and line unto surfeit, and a bass of thirty to fifty pounds is not unusual. I have seen them displayed on the market stalls of Baltimore weighing eighty-five to one hundred pounds. One of the best localities on the eastern coast is at Allenhurst, N. J., where a forty-eight pound bass has been taken, and those generally killed on the rod do not average less than five pounds.

The favorite bait for striped bass on the Pacific coast is the long-necked clam, after which, in relative value, are the shrimp, crab, and squid. On the eastern coast I have found no better bait than the shedder, or paper shell crab. In deep water around San Francisco a live minnow is used, which practise is to be commended to eastern anglers, few if any of whom pay the slightest attention to the fact that the killie, or mummichog minnows, swarming in eastern salt water shallows is the best lure for large striped bass, weakfish, and bluefish.

A Pennsylvanian angler, eager to essay, the black bass with an artificial fly, wants to know how to dress the "bucktail fly," which has been found to be very killing on the waters of Indiana. Some time ago I received a similar query, and referred the matter to Myron D. Butler, of Indianapolis, an acknowledged expert on the subject and a skilled and ardent angler. Mr. Butler always uses an eyed hook with a side bend, which is presumably about the same size as a No. 4 Sproat, as that would be sufficiently large and strong to hold any black bass in western waters if the fish is handled properly. He takes an E. E. white silk thread, winds it on the shank of the hook with a touch of

shellac, and makes a few turns only, not closer than a quarter of an inch from the eye of the hook. The tail, consisting of six or eight strands of twisted silk (any color), is then put on and tied tightly. Then lay the hair on the hook—the tip ends not far behind the bend of the hook. Distribute the hairs around the hook to suit yourself.

FLY FISHING AND SURFACE TROLLING.

AN AMATEUR who is going to the North Woods for the fishing should first decide what species of fish he wishes to catch: whether brook trout, lake trout, or black bass; for these are the only three kinds in search of which it will pay to take the Adirondack trip. When he has decided this point, he must next determine the time of his going.

First, we will say; you are going for brook trout. Take with you a pair of hip boots, for quite likely there will be some wading to be done. Your tackle will consist of a light fly rod, twenty-five or fifty yards of braided silk line, one dozen three foot gut leaders, two or three dozen snelled trout hooks of various sizes, and as large an assortment of flier as you care to expend your money upon. The hooks and flies you must have in plenty, for no one knows how often these may have to be sacrificed in order to save the rest of his equipment. If you have a reel which has been tried and found true, take it in preference to a new one with some patent arrangement unless the arrangement has been found thoroughly practicable. I counsel this because the reel plays so important a part in the taking of a gamey brook trout; and should it become clogged, you might be doomed to a disappointment which would wear frightfully upon your repose of mind. Do not forget a landing net with jointed handle in addition to a few split shot sinkers, and you have all that might be considered absolutely necessary. However, a fish basket and a bait box are both very handy articles and will repay in usefulness any extra expense they may incur. On your way to the woods, let the basket contain all your tackle except the rod, which it can very easily do; and when coming out, you could have nothing better in which to export a mess of speckled beauties. It is far better to purchase all your equipment before starting, since in the woods prices are extortionate.

Now that you have fitted out, you must next select the region you wish to visit. This,

of course, is a matter of individual preference except in a general way. Upon reaching your destination, inquire of your guide concerning the streams round about. If there are any that issue from preserves, find them out, and beginning as far up the stream as the law will allow, fish it thoroughly. In such a stream you are reasonably sure of taking more trout than in any other, for there is always a stock from which it may be replenished when exhausted by previous fishermen. Begin by using flies, substituting whenever one proves inefficient. If after trying a number the trout will not rise, procure some worms or bugs from a rotten stump and see what these will effect. By keeping faithfully at work in this manner you will be sure to make a catch before long, for patience is the key to successful fishing.

So much for brook trout, and next let us consider the lakers. You will have some oil of tar, or any other preparation which you prefer, to fortify yourself against the attacks of black flies and mosquitoes. This also holds good as to your brook trout expedition. No special articles of apparel need be taken, since all the fishing will be from a boat and in such a depth of water that the wading clothes mentioned above will be of little use to you. The trolling rig has already been set forth in the January (1900) number of *OUTING*, so it will not be necessary to describe it a second time. Besides this and your landing net, or gaff, the only tackle which you will have occasion to use will be a buoy line and hook. The line should be a braided linen nearly one-eighth of an inch in diameter to avoid cutting the hands, and the hook one which measures three-quarters of an inch, from barb to shank, is two or three inches long, and has a very stout gut snell not less than eight inches in length. (I regret that there is no reliable standard of size either in lines or hooks.) It is best to have at least twenty-five yards of line, so that should you lose a few feet occasionally, there would still remain enough to continue the sport; and of hooks take three. Your guide will attend to the buoy and to the baiting of it, and will also show you how to manage your line. I will not go into detail concerning this, since one cannot indulge in buoy fishing unless he employs a guide who either has a buoy of his own or can procure one. There are a few sportsmen, indeed, who have baited up abandoned buoys by means of suckers cut into pieces an inch or so square and strewn about the buoy for several yards and enjoyed some success. But these men

had had previous experience in such fishing and were far from novices.

As to the best region to visit, I will only say keep to the large lakes, for in those you will find larger trout and more of them. The small lakes contain brook trout almost to the exclusion of "lakers," and the few of the latter which may fall to your lot will rarely have attained any great size.

Lastly we will speak of black bass. For these September and October are my favorite months, and they are without insect pests. However, the sport is good at any time from June until November. There are three methods, which are generally employed: bait fishing, fly fishing, and surface trolling. An entire separate tackle for each, however, is not at all necessary. An eight and a half foot, pliable, bait rod, and twenty-five yards of braided silk line, tested to about fifteen pounds, will do for all three. To it may be attached a hook, flies, or spoon, as you please. Take a dozen six foot gut leaders, one or two dozen snelled bass hooks of three or four different sizes, a goodly assortment of bass flies, and perhaps three various sized spoons. A landing net or gaff, together with several minnow hooks and a bait pail, which are also necessary accessories to lake trout trolling, will complete your equipment. Most guides, however, will furnish a bait pail.

As to choosing the lake you are to visit, all but the very small and very shallow ones afford good bass ground. Bass lie, for the most part, in from six to fifteen feet of water; in a large lake, along the shores and about the reefs and islands; in a lake whose common depth is not over twenty feet they are scattered pretty generally throughout.

You are first to try bait fishing. Some one will tell you in what stream chub and shiners are most likely to be found. After procuring a supply of these, and rigging your line with a snelled hook, anchor in about twelve feet of water, preferably in the shadow of the shore or an island, where you may begin operations. Upon getting a strike, do not attempt to hook your fish, but allow him to run with the bait for several yards, in order that he may get it well into his gullet. When you think that he has had sufficient time to do this, bring him up sharply, and without a doubt the victory will be yours. At first do not remain long in one spot, but try a number of likely places and take note of the best. Then fish these as long as they continue good.

We will simply glance at fly fishing. Have

your guide or companion row you very slowly along the shore, far enough out so that when casting toward land, which is the better direction, your flies will alight in water that is something under twelve feet in depth.

In trolling always use a rod and reel in preference to a hand line, since in so doing many times the amount of sport may be enjoyed. Let out the line to about twenty yards, and with some one to row you just fast enough to keep the line, say one inch below the surface, you have nothing to do but to wait for a strike.

DEEP WATER LAKE TROLLING.

SURFACE trolling is a very simple matter and I consider it the equal of deep water trolling. In the first place the fish caught by it are seldom as large as those caught by deep water trolling. Then there is a nicety required in keeping the gang at the correct distance from the bottom. Even hooking the minnow properly takes a large amount of experience, and when a fish strikes, though one use the hand line, which I do not sanction in the least, there is sure to be a struggle in bringing it to the surface.

Probably on account of the skill and experience necessary in its practise this very interesting pastime has not received the attention it deserves. A peculiar tackle too is required; the lack of this may hinder a great many sportsmen from attempting it, since they go to the lakes supplied with nothing but the ordinary rods, reels, lines, and hooks. This deep trolling tackle and the modes of using it have almost as many modifications as there are fishing regions, but I will confine myself to that used in the Adirondacks because I am better acquainted with that species, and because more anglers know the North Woods than any other sporting section.

The first thing to select is a good ten or twelve ounce bait rod; a steel one answers the purpose very well. Before using it should be thoroughly tested, for a vicious strike from a six pound lake trout is quite often the doom of a poor rod. The best reel is a multiplier, with click, drag, and extra long crank, and a capacity of at least one hundred and twenty-five, or better still one hundred and fifty yards. The line should be one hundred yards or over, and very stout; a braided silk tested to about eighteen or twenty pounds is just the thing; have it waterproof or not as you think best. Test this line yourself, or quite likely your largest fish will, as usual, get away, and per-

haps take a great part of the line with him. If it will stand a strain equal to the one guaranteed, it is perfectly safe. And now comes the most particular part of the whole tackle; the leaders, gangs, and swivels. The gang used in this sport consists of five or six three-barbed hooks wound upon a stout gut leader; beginning with the large one, perhaps one and one-half inches from point to point, and gradually diminishing in size as they approach the end. About an inch above the largest gang is a lip hook, with which the minnow is fastened. This style of gang can be obtained at almost any sporting goods establishment; the rigging of it you should attend to yourself as follows: Get two brass swivels an inch or more in length; attach the gang to an eye of one of them, and to the other eye fasten a piece of strong line four feet long; place the remaining swivel on the other end of this line. Next procure a second length of line, about three feet, and knot one end into the swivel last mentioned, taking the same eye which has already been used; on the other end fasten a two or three ounce lead sinker. It only remains then to attach the apparatus to your braided silk and the tackle is finished. Do this by knotting the line into the unoccupied eye of the last swivel.

Now as to the manipulation. Of course, the first thing to consider is the bait; shiners three to five inches long make the best. Procure a supply of these, and with your friend or your guide to row you about the lake there is no reason why you should not be made happy by a fine catch. When baiting up, hook the minnow through both lips by means of the lip hook, and pass one of the gang through its back at such a distance below the dorsal fin as will cause the body of the shiner to curve outward to a considerable degree. Drag the baited gang behind the boat for a short distance and if the minnow whirls somewhat in the manner of a trolling spoon, you may drop your line; but should it not turn freely, readjust the gang, making a difference in the curve formed by the body of the fish. This you must repeat until the desired end is attained, for you can learn it only by experience.

Having let your line out until the sinker strikes bottom, draw it up until it touches only occasionally and keep it at that depth; for if higher the bait is not so apt to be seen, since the lakers lie near the bottom and if lower the gang is quite sure to unafoul of sunken débris. Experience will perfect you in this matter.