

The Somersetshire Fauna.

(Continued.)

BY MR. W. BAKER.

Fishes.

ACANTHOPTERYGII.

PERCIDAE.

Perch. *Perca fluviatilis*Basse. *Labrax lupus*Couch's Polyprion. *Polyprion cernium*Great Weever. *Trachinus draco*Lesser Weever. *T. vipera*Striped Red Mullet. *Mullus surmuletus*

FISHES WITH HARD CHEEKS.

Sapphirine Gurnard. *Trigla hirundo*Piper. *T. lyra*Grey Gurnard. *T. gurnardus*Shining Gurnard. *T. lucerna*Miller's Thumb. *Cottus gobio*

Short-spined Cottus.

C. scorpius

Long-spined Cottus.

*C. bubalis*Armed Bullhead. *C. cataphractus*

Rough-tailed Stickleback.

Gasterosteus trachurus

Half-armed Stickleback.

G. semiarmatus

Smooth-tailed Stickleback.

G. leiurus

Ten-spined Stickleback.

G. pungitius

Fifteen-spined Stickleback.

G. spinachia

SPARIDAE.

Braize. *Pagrus vulgaris*Sea Bream. *Pagellus centrodontus*

SCOMBERIDAE.

Mackerel. *Scomber scomber*

Sword-Fish. *Xiphias gladius*

Scad. *Caranx trachurus*

Dory. *Zeus faber*

Boar-Fish. *Capros aper*

RIBAND-SHAPED FISH.

Red Bandfish. *Cepola rubescens*

MUGILIDAE.

Grey Mullet. *Mugil capito*

Thick-lipped Grey Mullet.
M. chelo

Atherine. *Atherina presbyter*

GOBIOIDAE.

Gattoruginous Blenny.
Blennius gattorugineus

Double-spotted Goby. *Gobius bipunctatus*

Spotted Goby. *G. minutus*

Gemmeous Dragonet. *Callionymus lyra*

FISHES WITH PECTORAL
FINS, FEET-LIKE.

Angler. *Lophius piscatorius*.

LABRIDAE.

Ballan Wrasse. *Labrus maculatus*.

Green-streaked Wrasse.
L. lineatus.

Blue-striped Wrasse.
L. variegatus

Three-spotted Wrasse.
L. carneus

Comber Wrasse. *L. comber*

Gilt-Head. *Crenilabrus tinca*

Goldfinny. *C. cornubicus*

Gibbous Wrasse. *C. gibbus*

ABDOMINAL.

MALACOPTERYGII.

CYPRINIDAE.

Common Carp. *Cyprinus carpio*

Crusian Carp. *C. gibelio*

Gold Carp. *C. auratus*

Gudgeon. *Gobio fluviatilis*

Tench. *Tinca vulgaris*

Roach. *Leuciscus rutilus*

Dace. *L. vulgaris*

Bleak. *L. alburnus*

Minnow. *L. phoxinus*

Loach. *Cobitis barbatula*

ESOCIDAE.

Pike. *Esox lucius*

Sea-Pike. *Belone vulgaris*

Sawry Pike. *Scomberesox saurus*

Flying-Fish. *Exocetus volitans*

SALMONIDAE.

Salmon. *Salmo salar*

Bull Trout. *S. eriox*

Parr. *S. salmulus*

Common Trout. *S. fario*

CLUPEIDAE.

Pilchard. *Clupea pilchardus*

Herring. *C. harengus*

Sprat. *C. sprattus*

Shad. *Alosa finta*

Allice Shad. *A. communis*

Anchovy. *Engraulis encrasicolus*

SUBBRACHIAL.

MALACOPTERYGII.

GADIADÆ.

- Cod. *Morrhua vulgaris*
 Haddock. *M. æglefinus*
 Whiting Pout. *M. lusca*
 Power Cod. *M. minuta*
 Speckled Cod. *M. punctata*
 Whiting. *Merlangus vulgaris*
 Whiting Pollack.
M. pollachius
 Hake. *Merlucius vulgaris*
 Lyng. *Lota molva*
 Three-bearded Rockling.
Motella vulgaris
 Five-bearded Rockling.
M. quinquecirrata
 Great Forked Beard.
Phycis furcatus
 Lesser Forked Beard.
Raniceps trifurcatus

PLEURONECTIDÆ.

- Plaice. *Platessa vulgaris*
 Flounder. *P. flesus*
 Dab. *P. linanda*
 Lemon Dab. *P. microcephalus*
 Long Flounder. *P. elongata*
 Holibut. *Hippoglossus vul-*
ris
 Turbot. *Rhombus maximus*
 Brill. *R. vulgaris*

- Muller's Topknot. *R. hirtus*
 Whiffe. *R. megastoma*
 Scaldfish. *R. arnoglossus*
 Sole. *Solea vulgaris*
 Lemon Sole. *S. pegusa*
 Variegated Sole. *Monochi-*
rus variegatus
 Little Sole. *M. linguatulus*

CYCLOPTERIDÆ.

- Lump Sucker. *Cyclopterus*
lumpus
 Unctuous Sucker. *Liparis*
vulgaris.
 Montagu's Sucker.
L. Montagu

APODAL.

MALACOPTERYGII.

MURÆNIDÆ.

- Sharp-nosed Eel. *Anguilla*
acutirostris
 Broad-nosed Eel. *A. latiros-*
tris
 Conger. *Conger vulgaris*
 Anglesey Morris. *Leptoce-*
phalus Morrisii
 Beardless Ophidium. *Ophi-*
dium imberbe

ANGUILLIDÆ.

- Sand Eel. *Ammodytes tobi-*
anus
 Sand Launce. *A. lancea*

LOPHOBRANCHII.

SYNGNATHIDÆ.

Deep-nosed Pipe-Fish.

Syngnathus Typhle

Æquoreal Pipe Fish.

*S. æquoreus.*Great Pipe Fish. *S. acus*

PLECTOGNATHI.

GYMNODONTIDÆ.

Oblong Sun Fish. *Orthogoriscus oblongus*

CHONDROPTERYGII.

STURIONIDÆ.

Sturgeon. *Acipenser sturio*

Broad-nosed Sturgeon.

A. latirostris

SQUALIDÆ.

Small-spotted Dog-Fish.

*Scyllium canicula*Common Tope. *Galeus vulgaris*Picked Dog Fish. *Spinax acanthias.*

RAIIDÆ.

Skate. *Raia batis.*Thornback. *R. clavata.*Flapper Skate. *R. intermedia.*

PETROMIZIDÆ.

Lamprey. *Petromyzon marinus.*Lampern. *P. fluviatilis.*Pride. *Ammocetes branchialis.*

Notes on the foregoing List of Fishes.

FISHES of many kinds, which are taken in considerable quantities in some parts of the kingdom, at almost any time of the year, and other species which approach the shores at regular seasons in innumerable multitudes, occur on the coast of Somerset rarely, or pay their periodical visits in small parties.

The turbid condition of the water of the Bristol Channel, no doubt is unfavourable to fishes which live much in the deep and clear sea.

The well known PERCH, is a beautiful fish both in form and colour, and is very abundant in fresh water rivers,

canals, and large ponds. This species has been taken in some parts of the kingdom more than six pounds in weight; in this county it seldom exceeds two pounds.

The BASSE is often taken on the Somersetshire coast. I have seen specimens weighing twelve pounds, brought from the estuary of the Parret, but the general size in the market is from half a pound to three pounds. It is a handsome fish, but not brilliantly coloured, of a chaste silvery hue, becoming gradually lighter and brighter from the back to the belly. This is the *Lupus* of the Roman poets.

COUCH'S POLYPRION was imperfectly known as a British species when Mr. Yarrell published his "History of British Fishes," but the supplement to the work cleared up the obscure parts of its history. It is not uncommon on the Devon and Cornish coast, and it occurs on ours nearly three feet long. I found in the stomach of one from the estuary of the Parret, a perfect and good sized *sepia officinalis*. In the Mediterranean this fish is common, and is sometimes taken one hundred pounds in weight. The colour is plain and dull.

The two species of TRACHINUS are taken on our coast, but are never abundant there. *T. vipera* is the rarer.

STRIPED RED MULLET is sometimes taken at the mouth of the Parret, but very seldom, and not large.

Of GURNARDS, we have several species on our coast, but none of them in any considerable numbers. I have met with the Shining Gurnard in Bridgwater market, but am not quite certain that it was taken on our coast.

We have four of the five British species of COTTUS. The Short-spined Cottus and the Armed Bull-head are often brought to market with shrimps, and the Long-spined Cottus with sprats.

We have all the STICKLEBACKS described in the "History of British Fishes," except the Short-spined Stickle, but it is doubtful whether they are all distinct species. The Fifteen-spined Stickleback is often brought to market with fish from Stolford, especially at the end of April, when I have found them full of roe and milt.

The SPARIDAE are rare on the Somersetshire coast, we have only the Braize and the Sea Bream.

MACKEREL. Amongst the many species of fish that are taken in multitudes on the shores of the open sea, and occur here only as rarities, I have to mention the Mackerel, which is of so great importance at some of our fishing stations. It is recorded that a catch of Mackerel, by sixteen boats from Lowestoffe on one day at the end of June, realized £5252; and it was supposed that no less than £14,000 altogether was realized by the owners and men concerned in the fishery of the Suffolk coast at that time.

THE SWORD-FISH has been found at the mouth of the Parret. I have particulars of the capture of three specimens there, from my departed friend Mr. Robert Anstice. Two other specimens have come under my examination. I found one on the sands at Burnham in the summer of 1850, but it was so putrid that I could take only a hasty view of it; its length was more than eight feet.

The DORY is occasionally brought to market from Stolford, with other fish.

THE BOAR-FISH is very rare, but I have met with specimens in Taunton market from the south coast, and in Bridgwater market from Stolford. The figure of this fish, in Yarrell's work, is from a specimen found on a fish-stall at Taunton. The specimen in the Society's museum, was presented by F. F. Luttrell, Esq. through Mr. John Govett, of Stringstone.

RED BANDFISH is rare ; a few have been taken in the estuary of the Parret. I once met with two specimens on the first of February, one sixteen inches long, with ripe roe, the other eight inches long, a male, with full milt. A few days later another female was brought to me, the ovarium of which was empty. The season of spawning is marked by this circumstance, and is probably the cause of their visiting our coast.

GREY MULLET is plentiful on the Somersetshire coast in summer. Many ascend the Parret beyond the reach of tide water, probably to spawn, as the fry of this species are found in the tributaries of the river in autumn.

GATTORUGINOUS BLENNY is often taken in the estuary of the Parret, in February and March. It probably comes to spawn, as the roe is then ripe. It is beautifully coloured and an interesting fish.

SPOTTED GOBY is sometimes plentiful in the clay pits about Bridgwater, Tide water occasionally enters these pits.

GEMMEOUS DRAGONET. Not uncommon. The brilliant colours which so curiously adorn these fish, I have found transferred to damp cloths in which I have wrapt them for a few hours, until I could deliberately examine them.

The ANGLER is not uncommon in Bridgwater Bay. Specimens of small size are often brought to market with other fish, but unintentionally, for at any age they are anything but tempting subjects for the fish-stall. The repulsive form of the Angler is expressed by some of its local names. I have had it brought from the estuary of the Parret weighing eighty pounds, with the ovarium empty.

The curious apparatus on the head, which gives it its most amiable name, is described in Yarrell's "History of

British Fishes ;” and the nervous system of these appendages, and other interesting and animated remarks on the fish, are given by Mr. Couch, in his “Cornish Fauna.”

The WRASSES are not numerous on our coast at any time. A few occur in May and June.

The BALLAN WRASSE is subject to great variation of colour, from a plain dull green, to a bright blue green, reticulated with vermilion and orange, and sometimes a rich red-brown, marked with blue and green.

The females have been described as plain in colour ; but I have seen them of bright and varied colours, when full of roe. They are sometimes taken with mature ova in February, and in March without ova.

The CARP, eight or nine pounds in weight, is sometimes taken in the clay-pits near Bridgwater, and from the culverts under the Taunton and Bridgwater canal.

The CRUSIAN CARP has been taken in the Parret.

The TENCH is abundant and fine in most of the slow drains of the marshes, and in large ponds. It is generally full of roe in June.

The ROACH flourishes in purer water. It is abundant in fresh water rivers and canals. The *Argulus foliacius*, a very interesting parasite, is often found on this fish.

The BLEAK is not common in the western part of the county.

The MINNOW is plentiful in many of our brooks and rivers. I have found it in the tide-water of the Parret.

The JACK, or PIKE, formerly abounded in the upper parts of the Parret, and in the large drains of the county, but not so now ; still it affords sport to anglers in the Avon and some other of our rivers.

The SEA-PIKE sometimes occurs in the Parret, nearly up to Bridgwater. It is often taken on our coast in summer.

SAWRY PIKE is rare. I have seen only one specimen, which was taken at Stolford at the end of July. It was sixteen inches long.

FLYING FISH. Two or three have been found at Burnham ; perhaps driven on shore by rough winds. I copy the following from Dr. Fleming's "History of British Animals" :—

"A single example of *Exocetus Volitans*, or Flying Fish, was caught at a small distance below Caermarthen, in the river Towy, in June, 1765. . . . Another in July, 1823, ten miles from Bridgwater, in the Bristol Channel, a notice of which was communicated to the Linnæan Society, by the Rev. S. L. Jacob, of Woolavington."

SALMON ascend many of the rivers of the county to spawn. They visit the Parret in May, June, and a few in July and August, but perhaps not for this purpose ; the condition of their roe, and the time of the year, seem to imply that some other instinct brings them into this muddy river at this season. We make the same complaint that is heard in the vicinity of other salmon rivers, namely, that salmon were formerly much more plentiful than now.

SALMON PEEL, SALMON TROUT, and BULL TROUT OF AUTHORS, are also taken in the Parret, in its estuary, and along the coast ; and the PARR and COMMON TROUT are in most of our fresh water rivers and streams. Very many books have been written on the genus *Salmo*, and of late years much has been done, through careful investigation, to lessen the confusion of supposed species and varieties of this genus ; but there is still much more to be done to make the subject intelligible to inquisitive naturalists. The number of species in our books is reduced,

and how many more will be found only varieties, is yet to be learned.

The PILCHARD, which is of such incalculable value in Devon, Cornwall, and other parts, is out of its proper element in the Bristol Channel, and only a few stragglers are found on our coast. The cause is perhaps the same as that which keeps away the multitudes of mackerel and other fish. Full and very interesting information on the laws made in the reigns of several sovereigns for regulating pilchard fishing, and the consequent trade, is to be obtained from Couch's "Cornish Fauna;" and accounts of the astonishing quantities sometimes taken, and their great value, are given in Yarrell's "British Fishes."

The HERRING does not visit our shores regularly in shoals; but sometimes, from September to January, large quantities are taken by drift and stake nets, along the whole line of coast westward, from the mouth of the Parret. A few are taken every autumn; and the herrings of the Bristol Channel are always delicious.

The SPRAT. This little fish affords the most valuable fishing that we have on the Somersetshire coast. Multitudes come here almost every October, and remain until January. They are caught by stake nets, chiefly at the Gore, and brought to the markets every day, and sometimes after every tide. A paragraph in the *Taunton Courier*, a few years ago, says that a ton of sprats was retailed in Taunton Market in one day; and from information which I have collected with great care, I learn that the sprat fishing, from the western extremity of the Gore to Weston-Super-Mare, will produce in a good season more than £10,000, at the retail prices.

The annual shoals of HERRINGS and SPRATS are great blessings to the poor, supplying abundance of good, fresh,

and exceedingly cheap food for two or three months in early winter ; the fish salted and dried, are much valued. Herrings and Sprats, strung and suspended in lines in cottage kitchens, are to be seen for months after the fishing season is over.

SHADS quit the sea in summer, and ascend rivers to spawn in fresh water ; they are common in the Parret.

ANCHOVIES are very fine at the mouth of the Parret, and are taken at Stolford in considerable numbers in May and June, when the roe is mature.

CODFISHES are taken nearly in every month at Stolford, but they are generally small, except in the last three months of the year, when considerable numbers of fine large fish are taken on the Gore, by hooks suspended from floated lines.

The WHITING is seldom large, but great quantities of small ones are brought to market almost constantly through the year.

The HADDOCK, WHITING POLLOCK, HAKE, and the LYNG, are taken occasionally, but they are not abundant.

The GREAT and LESSER FORKED BEARD, are found only as rareties.

The PLAICE is common, but seldom large.

The FLOUNDER or FLOOK is very abundant, and is taken at sea, in tide rivers, and in the fresh water, above the flow of tide. It is sometimes taken in clear streams far from tide rivers.

The DAB is common, but does not inhabit fresh water, like the Flounder. It feeds much on the small Mollusk, *Bulla retusa*.

The LEMON DAB is rare.

LONG FLOUNDER. Two specimens only are recorded, which were taken at Stolford, and which I sent to Mr. Yarrell, who says in his "Supplement to the History of

British Fishes," 'I have reason to believe that it is not only undescribed as a British Fish, but is altogether new to Ichthyology.'

The **HOLIBUT** is not uncommon on our coast; it is generally small, but sometimes a large one is taken; a specimen of thirty or forty pounds is considered large, although this fish has been brought to Bridgwater from other parts weighing more than 200 lbs.

The **TURBOT** is not uncommon, but it is almost always small; the same may be said of the **BRILL** and others of this family of fishes.

MULLER'S TOPKNOT is often taken in spring.

The **SOLE** is always abundant and delicious from Stolford and other fishing stations of our channel, but generally much smaller than the usual size of this fish from the shores of the open sea.

LEMON SOLE, the **VARIEGATED**, and the **LITTLE SOLE**, are rare.

LUMP SUCKER is common; the roe is mature in April; I have found it weigh one pound, thirteen ounces, from a fish of six pounds, three ounces.

EELS are abundant on the sandy parts of the coast of our channel, and in our rivers, streams, ponds, and ditches; it is our most widely diffused species of fish. **ELVERS** ascend the rivers in spring, they go up the Parret in March, April, and May, with the high tides, and myriads are skimmed up with fine nets at the ebbing of the tide, by the cottagers above Bridgwater.

These innumerable multitudes of little creatures, soon leave the salt and brackish water, against every obstacle, entering rivulets, brooks and drains, and occupying all the inland waters, thus providing for the constant waste of the species. Mature Eels leave the fresh water with the first

floods of Autumn, and go to sea; probably they afterwards remain on the shore, for they are found inhabiting the sands and mud between high and low water mark.

The CONGER on our coast is abundant, but seldom large. It was considered by distinguished naturalists not twenty years ago, specifically the same as the common Eel, changed in size and color by living constantly in the sea; but it is now well known that specific differences are striking and numerous; above all, that the Conger has thirty vertebræ more than the Eel. Both are now known to be oviparous, and not viviparous, as until lately believed.

ANGLESEY MORRIS. This curious and rare little fish has been often brought to me from Stolford in summer. The late Mr. Anstice met with two specimens taken in the Parret, which he sent to Col. Montagu, and an account of them was published in the Wernerian Transactions.

BEARDLESS OPHIDIUM. One specimen only has come to my hands, which was taken at Stolford, in September 1838, and I sent it to Mr. Yarrell, with two of the last named species, who wrote to me as follows: "I have your obliging letter and box with the interesting contents,—the two examples of the Anglesea Morris and the Beardless Ophidium, which I had never seen before, and as there is an example of a Bearded Ophidium in the British Museum, I shall be able to do well with this genus, in the second edition of British Fishes."

SAND EELS are found in the mud and sand between high and low water at Stolford, but not in great numbers.

The PIPE FISHES are found as curiosities; the Great Pipe Fish is most frequently taken.

The OBLONG SUN FISH has occurred in the Bristol Channel off our coast. One was washed ashore at Swansea, in 1843, which weighed 180 lbs.

The STURGEON. Very large Sturgeons come up the Parret, sometimes almost to Bridgwater, several have been taken in the river and its estuary, from 250 lbs. to 280 lbs. weight ; one was taken in 1850, ten feet long, and weighed 300 lbs. These large fish are females full of roe, and generally taken in June and July. Small specimens from six to twenty pounds are not uncommon.

The DOG FISHES, SHARKS, SKATES, RAYS, &c. are only casual visitors ; the thick water of the Channel is no doubt unfavourable to this tribe of fishes ; the Common Skate and Thornback are the most abundant.

The FLAPPER SKATE was sent to me from Minehead, in April, 1838, by our lamented Vice President, the late Mr. Standert.

The LAMPREY, and the LAMPERN, are taken in the Parret ; and the PRIDE is very common in our brooks.
