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Report 21

THE USE OF A TRAP NET FOR EXPERIMENTAL FISHING IN INLAND LAKES

We went out of our way to give the trap net another trial, at some inconvenience (incidentally the southern trip with the Reo truck was in part decided on to pick up the net). The setting of this net is a difficult matter for our equipment. It requires lashing the two boats together, and takes a considerable time. It is very bulky and difficult to ship or transport from lake to lake. We set the net first in the best situation we could find in Starvation Lake. McCrimmon, who learned trap-net setting from Saginaw Bay fishermen, took charge of the set and did a good job. But in two days and nights only 3 bass and 1 sucker were caught. A string of gill nets no longer than the lead of the trap caught in the same lake in one night about 60 suckers, perch and bass. Further, three of the four fish caught in the trap were gilled in the mesh.

The boys naturally were not anxious to reset the net, but I instructed them to give it a further trial. In Blue Lake they were able to get only 3 fish in it, although the gill nets yielded good catches.

It may be that the lead is not deep enough, or that the mesh is too large or too small, but as it is, this trap net proves unusable in inland lakes. I shall talk to Van Oosten about the construction of the net when it arrives in Ann Arbor (due soon) and see if he has an idea that it is radically wrong for inland lake

setting.

I suspect that no trap net would prove satisfactory. Most of our inland lakes are too deep or too shallow, or have too steep a slope, to set the net so as to lead the fish into the pot. A deeper lead would have been better in Starvation Lake, but then the next lake we might want to use the net in might be everywhere too shallow for the deeper lead. To carry along two or more leads of different depths (and length too for that matter) so as to make the net fit the lakes, would make too much load, and would take up too much time making the changes, to make this net satisfactory in each lake.

While we know that the trap net if properly made for the lake would allow us to examine the fish and return all those except noxious species and except those needed for examination or preservation, the average lake resident or sport fisherman does not know this. I think that the sight of two to four men setting the large trap net from two boats lashed together, would cause more worry or suspicions than a moderated amount of gill net setting. I have instructed the boys to set only enough nets to get the information and specimens needed; not to set where seining is possible; to set the nets unobtrusably but not secretly; to set mostly in deep water, and to go out of their way when necessary to explain the reasons for the net setting.

Incidentally, we deem our own fishing an absolutely essential part of any lake survey investigations. We have long since learned that a large proportion of the fishermen and conservation officers too make mistakes of identification or fail to remember rightly or that they have never seen all the species of game fish, let alone small species in the lakes. And occasionally we find folks exaggerating or even lying (not often the latter) when they think something can be gained.

We plan, too, to use our catches more than in the past to give some idea of the food conditions in the lakes, the growth of the fish, and their condition as regards parasites, etc.

The New York Biological Survey found too that trap nets were not satisfactory in the inland lakes, especially in the summer. In that season, I suppose after the stratification of water layers become well fixed, the fish wouldn't seem to lead down into the pot.

We make this rather long report to give our reasons for abandoning at least for the present, the use of this trap net, and for confining our net work to shore seining, and the setting with due care, moderation and explanation of short strings of gill and one or two small trammel nets, of varied mesh.

/s/ Carl L. Hubbs

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