

IT'S BASS TIME NOW.

Spring Joys for Anglers on the Mississippi.

LANGUAGE OF THE GAME BIRDS.

The Dowitcher's Death Song and the Duck's Cries.

The Upper Mississippi the Largest Bass Stream in the World and One of the Best-Fishing Now Going on There.

Art of Calling Ducks—Fun for Boys in Spearfishing—Strange Power of the Quail to Fly Noiselessly at Times—A Farmer's Automatic Device for Killing Hawks.

In general the game laws of the Northern and Northwestern States permit the taking of bass on and after May 1, but the anglers who live along the great streams of that part of the country do not pay strict attention to the law. They begin fishing when the ice goes out and keep it up until the ice forms solid from bank to bank. The ice is out now and the reel sings with the nesting birds.

There is no other taking of fish which quite equals the early spring catch of bass. In midsummer larger scores may be made, the fish may be rising to the fly and adding more science to the sport, they may be had without effort and they may be plumper, but in July or August the freshness of the undertaking has worn off and the appetite of the fisherman may be half-gone.

In April he goes to his stream after an enforced rest of months. In the dull winter he has had ample time in which to spin theories. Possibly he has invented a new lure or two. He aches for a sight of the foaming water and the noise of the water which shoots along the line when a three-pounder is struck. He is not disposed to covet, anxious to make the best of everything, willing to undergo almost any privation or discomfort for the sake of the first outing of the year.

The words are in their faint green, the grass is half grown, the tang of water is in the air, sharply felt in the morning, disappearing utterly at noon, to return when the sun is low. The trees are vocal with birds which have found their way across thousands of miles of country.

Early flowers peep from the shelter of the banks. All around is a carpet of light and small of sweet growing things. Nature is renewing and the angler sitting out lustily while the hour frost still lingers in gray on bare boughs and fences, is himself renewed.

He is twice as strong as when he got out of bed and such a cubic foot of air that he pumps into himself makes him lighter of heart and foot. He knows of deep pool where the fog lingers longest last fall. For months light has drifted into them dimly through a roof of ice eighteen inches thick. He thinks that maybe some of the former denizens are still deep down waiting for his coming. He knows of purring waterfalls and swift eddies where trout used to circle before going down stream, and he intends to try them first, confident that he will half fill his basket before 10 o'clock.

The fish are ready for him. Through the winter they have got along as best they could. Food has been scarce. The big ones have fed on the little ones when they could catch them and on such scant provender as found its way under the ice and floated by. They are hungry, as active as wild cats and as strong as bulls.

There is no season in which they strike more voraciously and fight more desperately. It is a sound working rule that the colder the water the gamer the fish and the waters of American streams at this time are very cold. The chill of the ice lingers in them, the sun is not warm enough to warm them thoroughly and the cold nights they throw off such heat as they may have gathered in the day.

The bass will not rise to the fly, because they know by instinct reason that the insects worth having are yet abroad. They are ravenous for live bait, however, and will take anything which simulates live bait with fair accuracy.

The largest bass stream in the world is the upper Mississippi and it is one of the best. The water, clear and bright, is usually cold and it offers every variety of current and eddies, all sorts of food and all sorts of shelter. It is but little known outside of its immediate neighborhood and little visited by foreign anglers, yet it is worth the attention of any man who wants to start with the casting rod and all with the fly-rod.

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management generally to dodge a mine, and bass fishing on the Mississippi is as good now as it was twenty years ago. There is no dynamiting, as the stream is too big to make that form of murder profitable.

Country folk dependent upon you and line never yet fished out any river of fair size. Diminution of supply is always due to hundreds of visitors from the cities, and the Mississippi as yet is almost virgin to the fisherman.

These people do not believe in artificial lures; though one going among them may show them time and again that No. 3 Bitter will occasionally double discount anything alive, they remain unconvinced. They still swear by minnows, small green frogs, and worms and a few fish which it must be confessed that they have frequently the better of the argument.

Their spears are long, fifteen feet long, their lines are of linen and coarse; they use no floats, the weedless hook is a refinement unknown to them, but so equipped they will never make catches that in weight and number would be the pride of the most finished and perfectly accoutred angler.

Indeed, the canoe in a boat is not to be despised. With the use of the fisherman a cast of thirty feet. He is thus able to cover a surface of sixty feet in diameter and this is nearly enough.

Few men with a six-foot casting rod, silk tackle and freely running reel average more than forty feet to the cast; they can cast further, of course, if it is necessary, but it is not necessary. In casting from a fixed point, however, the bank, an island or a log, the man with the pole is at such disadvantage.

Russ are little cattle. There are times when they will slay any sort of artificial bait, but it excites never so cunningly. Spoons, phantom minnows, rubber frogs, crawfish or hellgrammities are alike ineffective.

There are days even when they will not touch a live fat minnow, or active frog or cool juicy crawfish. At such times they pin their faith only to anglerworms. The appetite of the bass for the worm is especially notable in the spring, the reason being unknown, but in the season they can be tempted by worms at all.

The resident upon the Mississippi's bank has gained by long trial a partial acquaintance with the habits of the bass's appetite and thus still has advantage of the city man, and he has always that advantage which comes from a thorough knowledge of the habits of his prey. Some of these men seem to know by intuition where the fish are; they can say only that such and such a place "looks busy," though to the experienced angler for other parts it does not look "busy" at all.

When the fisherman occupies himself in learning thoroughly that part of the river in which he intends to fish, and he has a confidence born of knowledge.

Each of the small islands with which the river is thickly interspersed is built upon the atoll principle. It is made of sand covered heavily with willows and underbrush and always in its centre is a lake which may cover one acre or a hundred acres.

These lakes are often higher than the mean level of the river, and when the river has sunk below them they empty themselves by small channels, thus making mimic waterfalls three feet high. Around these little falls are bass. They gather for the food which is carried down the lakes and this food may be smaller fish, minnows, crawfish or larvae of many kinds.

The little lakes are not so tempting and near the falls spring fishing is much worth while. A man in an anchored skiff may sit at his ease and take all the day long care for in a couple of hours and he will have some rare lights to remember. If he is upon the sunny sheltered side of an island he will not be cold, and he will be just right, not cold, not hot, and he will feel like working.

Live bait will give more action than the spunk baiting minnows, as it is little early for frogs. Salt pork, with a bit of red flannel attached to the hook, is practically useless at this time; it is a great killer in the summer.

A month hence insect life will be busy above the great stream and then the red-bellied minnow, the chief bait for the Bass. This sport is more satisfactory on no other American water because the fish are plentiful, heavy and courageous, spaces are practically unlimited and there is always room for a cast.

Flies cast from a punt which drifts slowly down the bank has not the difficulties which beset the water in narrow streams, overhung with trees, and the loneliness, silence and picturesque beauty of the Mississippi have a placid charm which to the true angler appeals as strongly as the size of his catch.

BUYING FOR LAKE TROUT.

One Method of Taking These Fish on Adirondack Lakes.

Buying for lake trout is a favorite method of killing these game fish on many of the Adirondack lakes, especially with the local fishermen. It is practised early in the season, chiefly, before the trout have sought the very deep water.

The fisherman first sounds for water that is between twenty and thirty feet deep, where the bottom is stony. The spot selected, he anchors a buoy there to mark it. Then he casts into small bits a few suckers, which, also, in Adirondack waters, are scattered near the buoy. This is called baiting the buoy, and is sometimes repeated two or three days in succession before any fishing is done.

The little lake trout, which are fish the buoy, he moors his boat to it. All the tackle necessary is a stout hand line, in which is tied a very large and very sharp hook. This hook is baited with a piece of sucker.

The baiting of the buoy has caused trouble to collect about it, and they are pretty sure to get a few trout. If they are eagerly seeking the bits that come down to them on hooks. The hook is carried down the line, and the fisherman is ready to pull or so above the bottom and in constant agitation.

A peculiarity about buoy fishing "pumping" is that several fish may be hooked at the same time, and the fisherman is ready to pull or so above the bottom and in constant agitation.

The instant that gentle touch on the bait is made, the fisherman is ready to pull or so above the bottom and in constant agitation.

The trout are pulled up quickly, but with a steady hand.

Red fishing on the Mississippi is now one of the most popular sports in the world. The fish are ready for him. Through the winter they have got along as best they could. Food has been scarce. The big ones have fed on the little ones when they could catch them and on such scant provender as found its way under the ice and floated by. They are hungry, as active as wild cats and as strong as bulls.

hunter, too. They did the first fire-lighting that ever was done in this bay. The boat was a platform in the middle of a boat and put a pile of pine knots and brush on top. With this blazing they approached a flock of wild geese. Father and son squatted in the bow with their guns ready. They had only single-barreled muzzle loaders.

The geese had their heads high up in the air, their long necks toward the boat. There was a great fleet of them, and they were all slowly moving in toward the bay. The hunters were all in a great hurry. The geese kept coming closer. Neither of 'em had a thought of what might happen when they shot.

"Both let go at once. They might have killed some geese; probably they did. But the next moment there they were, their arms over their heads, down flat in the bottom of the boat, and on top of 'em what seemed like hundreds of squawking, spluttering, flapping geese.

The boat was full of 'em. The boy in the stern was knocked down, too. Gill's gun was knocked into the bay. The boat was nearly swamped with geese piled all over each other and seeming scared to death. They beat out the fire. The geese just smothered it. And that they slowly drew their noses and got away.

"It seems that when those geese heard the bang of the guns they just dived right into it and into the boat. The whole flock must have been in there at once; no less than 150 of 'em, just hurling themselves at her in a heap.

"My father told me 'twas as much as a man's life was worth to get out of that boat. They could, if they had tried after the rush let up, have killed dozens of those geese, but they didn't try. They were too scared to try. My father nor Gill ever went fire-lighting again.

"Nothing of that kind could have happened with an ordinary gun. It was that tremendous big blaze that blinded those geese I suppose. For all that, when a fire-light is used these days it is always put out right after a shot is fired and the geese get away all right.

That little story shows, though, what a fire-light does to the nerves of a goose. The birds never want to come near the spot again where they've once had a scare like that.

VANITY OF THE DRAKE.

Exhibition by a Mallard Witnessed by a Gunner in Texas.

William Saunders of Aransas county, Tex., known commonly as "Goose Bill," killed a good many ducks and geese last winter. He hunts on three days of the week in a great game country, and the aggregate slaughter inflicted by him is tremendous.

The geese and ducks he kills his memory merges into one nearly indistinguishable mass. To him one day is pretty much like another and he has to refer to his notebook wherein he sets down his totals if he wishes to remember any special incident clearly. One thing happened to him, however, that stands out, and he is fond of telling about it.

He had made a good breakfast for himself, beginning to shoot as soon as it was light enough to see. After feeding himself and smoking a pipe, he shouldered his gun, stuffed some luncheon into his pocket and, accompanied by his old liver-colored retriever, started for an inspection of the various ponds and streams.

He did not expect to kill much, but he wanted to find where the ducks were doing most of their feeding. He walked and walked, making an occasional shot and hanging the bird to his game strap, and when 12 o'clock came he was tired and hungry.

Five miles from camp he found a jewel of a pond hidden between the rolls of the prairie. It was not more than three acres in extent, deep and clear. Its surface, unruffled by a breeze, was like a great steel mirror set in a frame of brown. At one end grew three large live oak trees in a clump standing back ten feet from the water's edge. The water was clear and shallow and was a thin growth of senna weeds three feet high.

Saunders sat with his back against one of the oaks, ate his luncheon and waited for the fog to lie at his feet, and then the pipe going, closed his eyes and was happy. The sky was brilliantly clear and blue, and he was not a little proud to stir a leaf of the live oaks.

A sudden splash caused him to look out over the pond. A hundred yards away a single mallard duck, with a single shot, had just been fired. The duck had glared like an emerald, and he had seen the reflection in the water. He had made a good breakfast for himself, beginning to shoot as soon as it was light enough to see. After feeding himself and smoking a pipe, he shouldered his gun, stuffed some luncheon into his pocket and, accompanied by his old liver-colored retriever, started for an inspection of the various ponds and streams.

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the nature of "everlasting flowers." Brilliant as they appeared they were found to be completely dried by the heat and drought.

After obtaining supplies of water from the Roman reservoir the party struck out for the Bonjoni oasis, whence the desert to Sokna, the destination of the expedition. It had been hoped to obtain supplies of food and water at the oases, but the water was so brackish that the discovery that the inhabitants were themselves starving, being dependent upon snails and date palm juice. The buildings at Bonjoni which were erected during the Roman occupation, are in striking contrast with the miserable structures built later by the Arabs.

The four days' journey from Bonjoni to Sokna was one of intense suffering. The route, through an absolutely uninhabited desert, as the party was without water, the journey was continued day and night in the intervals between badgering. When the expedition arrived at Sokna it was thoroughly exhausted and was obliged to remain there a week for recuperation. Sokna, which was already well known to the army, had a population of 2,000 and a Turkish garrison of 200 men.

The journey was continued to Murzuk, some 300 miles further south, which had been reached by Barth and other explorers. The chief events on this part of the journey were crossing the dihr, a range of Black Mountains, and the passing through a great petrified forest. The Black Mountains are of large blocks of perfectly black stone and are difficult to cross. The hours were occupied in traversing the petrified forest. The trees were all lying prone upon the ground, and the ground was two inches to seven feet. Marine shells were found all through the forest, showing that this region was at one time submerged by the sea.

Returning from Murzuk the party passed through Sokna and then by another route to the coast, which was reached at Ben Ghazi.

THE DOWITCHER'S DEATH SONG.

Of All the Cries of the Bird World It Is the Saddest and Strangest.

The winged jacksnipe, squatting low on the edge of a marsh, will sometimes utter a guttural croak as its pursuer draws near and when it does this the end of its bill will be against the ground. The quail, hurt so much by the shot, will utter a sharp, frightened cry just before the dog catches it. But the saddest and most peculiar sound in all bird nature comes from the wounded dowitcher which sees that escape is impossible.

This long-legged brown member of the plover family is not ordinarily an expert at concealing itself. It runs through the grass with no effort at hiding and trusts most to its wariness and willingness to take wing. When a wing-bone is broken, however, it develops a special cry, and instead of the quail, which is not a dog it will often escape on ground that is apparently bare. The hunter who has seen it fall will find it most surely by going as near to the spot as his memory will guide him and then moving in a wide circle gradually narrowing in until the point where he last saw the bird for its centre.

If his calculation has been correct he will draw closer and more close to it. The bird, however, will not fly, but will utter only the dull brown feathers of its back, neck and head, will be watching him. When he gets within five feet of it no attempt to conceal himself is made. Instead it lifts its bill slightly and utters a low sweet moaning note which is sadder than the call of any other bird.

This note is unexpectedly loud and has a booming quality. It is audible thirty, forty and even fifty yards away, and is a sharp, clear, and somewhat hoarse sound. The sound seems to fill all of the air about it, and it is more affecting and gets on the nerves of even the hardened shooter.

The bird crouches perfectly still, even when it knows it is discovered. It does not move a muscle when the large hand of the hunter is hovering over it. It does not utter a sound, but it will utter a single note of deadly fear until it is killed.

The man who hears this sound for the first time will be struck by its nature. It is a note of invitation or warning, is the only sound in the bird's repertoire except its call. It is a note of invitation or warning, is the only sound in the bird's repertoire except its call.

Hardened hunters find wounded concealed birds by this moaning, but most men would go considerably out of their way to avoid it. It is more affecting and even than the doleful steady weeping of a frog which is hooked through the throat.

SEPARATE PICKEREL.

Spring Fun Made Possible for Boys in Spring by the Fish's Habits.

If the pickerel had more sense and caution, it would fare better in the warm spring days. It is of the pike family and has the pike voracity, but lacks the pike activity and wariness.

Just as a real fish to get upon a sun-drenched bank and to the high summer months, it is a fish of the pike family and has the pike voracity, but lacks the pike activity and wariness.

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just as there is an art in most field practices. If it be in very shallow water it is an easy matter but if the water be deeper allowance must be made for refraction, and this allowance increases in proportion to the depth.

If the pickerel is three feet deep the water under its apparent position; if it be more than three feet any cast will be less accurately directed. It is not struck and fastened at a greater depth than two feet. The spear is light and cannot be sent any further through a greater thickness of water, though in this respect a great deal depends upon the thrower, some boys and men having exceptional skill.

Spearfishing in the spring is a sport worth while for older boys. There is plenty of exercise and uncertainty in it, fresh air and the harmless stir of awakening vegetation. Unless hip boots be worn wet feet are unavoidable, but wetness is a part of the condition of the man who goes after fish.

Some of the fish so taken are of gigantic size, possibly because the big ones are the latest arrivals and better able to hold and invite their souls. Last week in a small lake near Deland, Wis., Jimmy Harris, a boy of 15, struck an enormous pickerel lying in a pool of water near some water flags. The fish was hit hard in the middle of the back, got to reasonably deep water in spite of his captor and there fought for fifteen minutes.

It was hauled in finally, another boy helping, and weighed thirty pounds, by far the largest of its kind ever taken in that region. Most pickerel in the inland lakes run from three to seven pounds.

QUAIL SCARE IN JERSEY.

And Restocking Prevented by New Laws in the South and West.

SEA ISLE CITY, N. J., April 12.—There is such a scarcity of quail in the southern counties of New Jersey that the sportsmen look for poor gunning next fall. The heavy snowstorms and severe cold last winter almost exterminated the birds.

A feature of the situation that worries sportsmen is that there seems to be no prospect of their coming back. The quail, unless the birds can be smuggled out of the Southern or Western States. In former years the New Jersey State Game and Fish commission and individuals had hundreds of quail sent to them from Oklahoma, Kansas and North Carolina. These States have since passed laws forbidding the exportation of quail.

A few days ago 300 quail were shipped to Thomas Torton of Pennsboro from Oklahoma. They failed to reach him, and he has learned that they were confiscated and turned loose by game wardens before they left the Territory.

Last week a like fate befell three crates containing 250 quail consigned to Cumberland county sportsmen. The birds were seized at Chatham and liberated on the outskirts of the city.

Cape May county sportsmen who were negotiating for a consignment of 500 quail from Oklahoma were told that the quail, as they do not believe that the birds could be got through.

The supply of Southern and Western quail cut off, the outlook for good shooting in South Jersey next fall is poor.

LANGUAGE OF THE DUCKS.

Cries by Which They Communicate With One Another—Art of Calling.

Guns along the Atlantic coast and the streams and lakes of the Mississippi Valley who have been peeping the northward flight of wild fowls have found the ability to call correctly of great assistance to them.

Ducks decoy more readily in spring than in autumn, presumably because there is less food and they are hungrier. They come to the hunter's call more readily, presumably because they are near the mating season.

There is no time of the year when an inexperienced caller stands any show. Calling is a science in itself, and a reasonable proficiency in it comes only after a man of natural aptitude has had years of practice.

Some persons cannot learn calling, just as others cannot learn to play the violin. One season ago a man who has not been in the habit of calling a dog and he will do well to abandon it altogether and trust only to his knowledge of the habits of the birds and to decoys, either artificial or domestic birds anchored by their legs.

To use duck-talk competently, the hunter must know not only the cries peculiar to each variety, but also when to give them and how much of them to give. The common error of amateur photographers is a over-exposure, and the common error of amateur callers is too much and too loud calling.

Ducks can hear a call moderately pitched at phenomenal distances, and they know just the loudness with which a call ought to sound. If a flock of mallards are half a mile from them, and they are not apt to swing in toward them.

If they hear repeated calls of the same kind, and notice of the varieties, they know that a duck because a duck is so insistent either to bid its brethren to a feast it is itself enjoying or to induce them to join in a feast. Before taking a duck, it is necessary for the caller in the formative stage to note the cries which express different emotions. Using the mallard, for example, its feeding call is unlike any other. It is usually a low, steady, and its call of inquiry is like a call of invitation or warning, is the only sound in the bird's repertoire except its call.

Hardened hunters find wounded concealed birds by this moaning, but most men would go considerably out of their way to avoid it. It is more affecting and even than the doleful steady weeping of a frog which is hooked through the throat.

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AN EDUCATIONAL CONTEST.

14 Prizes to Be Awarded To the Value of \$250.00 TWO HUNDRED AND FIFTY DOLLARS \$250.00

To readers of THE SUN who may enter this Educational Contest will be awarded the following prizes for the best 14 replies to the following questions: 1st Prize THE BEST 12 STANDARD VOLUMES OF REFERENCE, 14 Mo. value, \$75.00. 2d Prize THE BEST 12 STANDARD VOLUMES OF REFERENCE, silk cloth value, \$75.00. 3d, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th, 11th, 12th, 13th, 14th Choice Popular Work of Fiction, \$1.50 each. 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th Choice Popular Work of Fiction, \$1.50 each. 21st-25th (21 questions) will be asked in VII series of three (3) questions each, appearing in THE SUNDAY SUN for seven (7) consecutive weeks, beginning March 17th, 1902. These questions will test the reader's fund of general information. They are not "catch questions," but have for their solution simply interesting facts that are not generally known. Answers should be sent to THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEST BUREAU, and all answers must be received on or before May 15, 1902.

This contest will prove exceedingly interesting to you, and the work of looking up the answers will prove to be valuable, this being the main object of this Educational Contest.

The prizes will be given for the best answers to the entire Seven series (21 questions). The winning papers will be selected not only for correctness, but for clearness, conciseness and completeness of expression.

SERIES 1. 1st Question: What famous rebellion is called a mutiny? 2d Question: What does Ovid say about sympathetic ink? 3d Question: Who invented and made the first typewriting machine in the United States?

SERIES 2. 4th Question: Of what country was the turkey a native? 5th Question: Who was the founder of Tammany? 6th Question: When and by whom was the spinning-jenny invented?

SERIES 3. 7th Question: What is the meaning of excise, and when did the system first come into use? 8th Question: Who invented the rifle now used by the United States Army? 9th Question: In what year was the largest day's business transacted in the New York Stock Exchange?

All Answers Should Be Addressed to THE EDUCATIONAL CONTEST BUREAU, 170 Nassau Street, New York City.

will be worse than realness. Therefore, when any of the ducks are seen, so far from his fellows that scaring the ducks will drive them toward the guns. Once this art is learned, however, he who has it is a great advantage over his competitors. This is so recognized that a guide on the Illinois River