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## NOTES ON THE MONTANA GRAYLING

It is possible that a word concerning the Montana Grayling may be of interest, especially when considered in connection with its introduction by artificial propagation into waters tributary to the Pacific Ocean. The Grayling which for gameness is not surpassed by the trout, and so far as flavor on the table or beauty in the stream is concerned, is hardly equalled by any fresh water fish, is native to the waters of northern Michigan, Montana (in the upper branches of the Missouri river) and Alaska in the streams tributary to the Yukon.

There is such a close resemblance between the species found in Michigan, Alaska and Montana, that it is hardly necessary to enter upon a discussion of the slight differences in structure, although they are recognizable, and the Montana Grayling is given a rank of its own. The fish was first noticed in Montana and described by Lewis and Clark in the report of their trip of exploration to the Pacific in 1803, and later was classified by James W. Millner of the United Fish Commission.

Until Dr. James A. Henshall, at that time Superintendent of the United States Fisheries Station at Bozeman, Montana, undertook to raise the grayling, no effort had been made to stock streams with this very desirable game fish.

The efforts toward artificial propagation were not at first successful, but with the patience and skill of a veteran, Dr. Henshall, after two or three efforts, succeeded, and between the years 1898 and 1907, distributed 17,343,026 fry and fingerlings from the Bozeman station.

So far as is known none of these fish were planted in streams flowing into the Pacific. It was not until the State of Montana established its hatchery at Anaconda, that any effort was made to stock streams other than those in which the grayling was native.

In 1909 the State Fish Commission of Montana obtained a quantity of grayling eggs and planted over one million fry in Georgetown Lake, which is located on the headwaters of Flint Creek, which flows toward the Pacific.

For two years, nothing was known as to the result of the planting, but at the end of this time fishermen reported catching grayling in Georgetown Lake, but only in small numbers. The third year many were caught, some of them weighing two pounds and over, and at the end of two years and a half reports were received that grayling weighing in the neighborhood of five pounds had been caught in this lake. As the fish rarely reaches a weight of two pounds in its native habitat the large size of those caught can only be accounted for on the theory that the water temperature and food supply in Georgetown Lake are both favorable to large growth. The State Fish Commission has thus succeeded in planting the grayling in at least one stream which flows westward to the Pacific and the success attained encourages further efforts in this direction.

That the fish have taken kindly to their new home is shown by the fact that during the spawning season of 1913, they entered the two inlets to this lake in great numbers to spawn. At one time there were held in the traps set for catching them, over eleven thousand of spawning eggs, from which were taken about fifteen million eggs which were handled in the hatchery at Anaconda, but with only partial success. The fry, which resulted from the eggs taken, were many of them planted in other streams on the west side of the Rocky Mountains and favorable results are hoped for.

In 1910 there were planted in the Bitter Root River, about fifty thousand grayling fry, and in 1911 and 1912 other plantings were made, but so far no results have been noticed. While reports are at times received that grayling have been caught, no specimens have been submitted for examination.

The Bitter Root River is a large fine trout stream and seems an ideal home for the grayling, and much interest is manifested in the result of the planting. Nothing could be more successful than the stocking of Georgetown Lake, hence the hope for similar results elsewhere.

To those who know and have fished for the grayling, or who have tasted its delicious flesh the stocking of suitable streams with this fish is a matter of much interest. The Montana waters which are profusely supplied with this fish are the Madison, Jefferson, Gallatin, Red Rock and Bighole Rivers, and many of the lakes found at the heads of these streams are also well supplied.

Should the details with reference to the propagation of the grayling be desired, attention is called to Bureau of Fisheries Document No. 628, where full information is given. It is the belief of the writer that an effort should be made to stock streams along the Atlantic seaboard with this fish. They multiply rapidly, have all the game qualities of the trout, are unexcelled as a food fish and to the sportsman are a source of great pleasure, because they take the fly readily and make a game fight.

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