

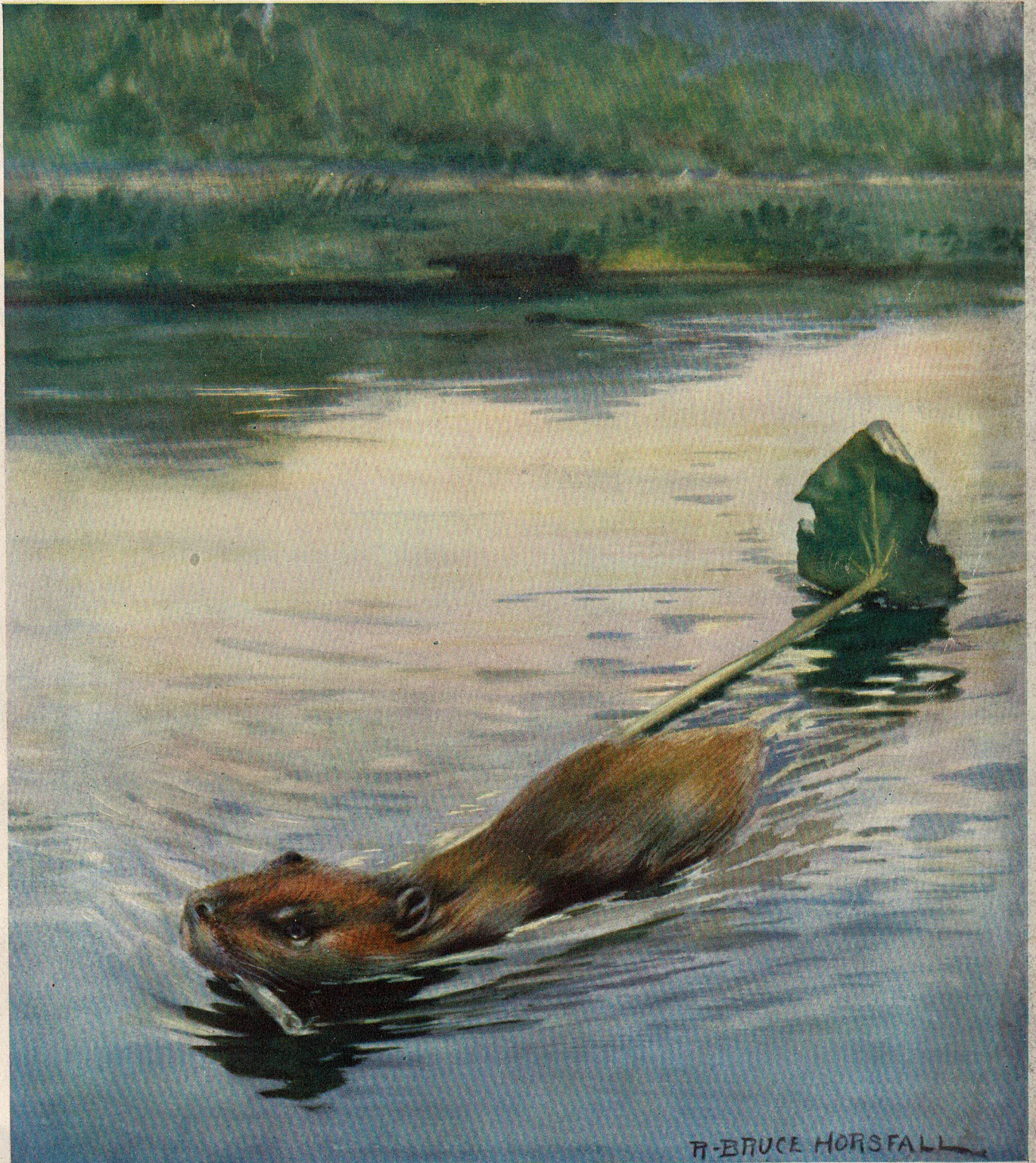
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Outdoor America

AUGUST,
1925

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DEFENDER OF WOODS, WATERS AND WILD LIFE



R. BRUCE HORSFALL

Mary Roberts Rinehart ~ Zane Grey

Defender of Woods, Waters and Wild Life

Outdoor America

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DR. HENRY VAN DYKE DONALD HOUGH
JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD FRANK STICK
HAROLD T. PULSIFER THOMAS AMBROSE
BEN EAST HAROLD TITUS

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30 days' notice must be given for change of address.

Fishing Virgin Seas

by Zane Grey



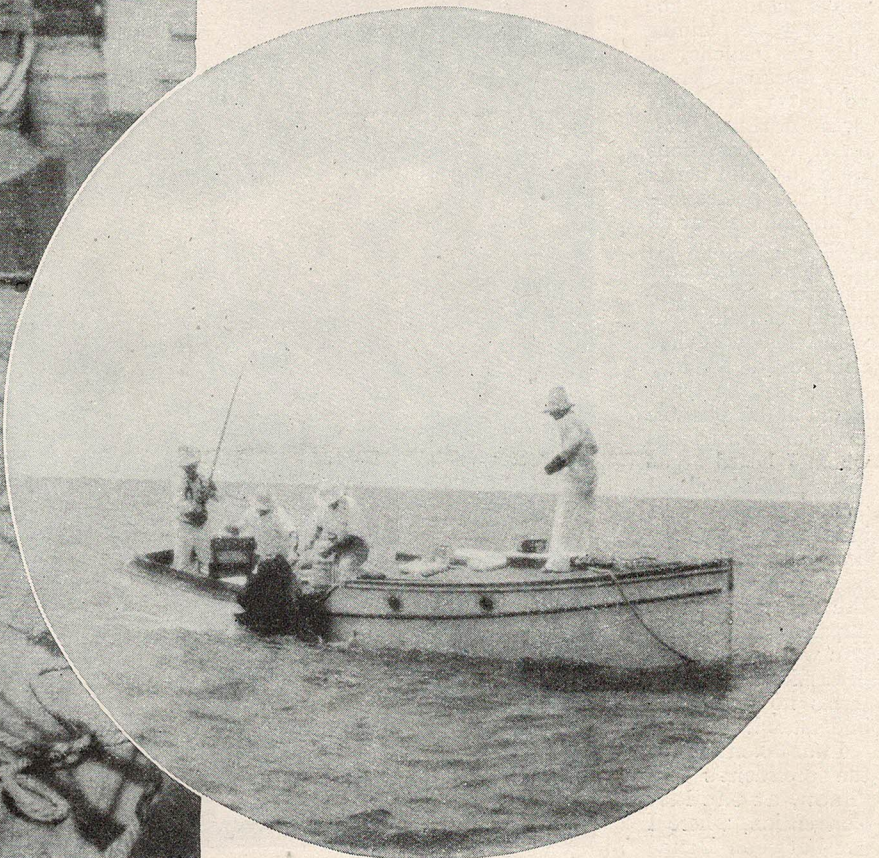
A marine Iguana.



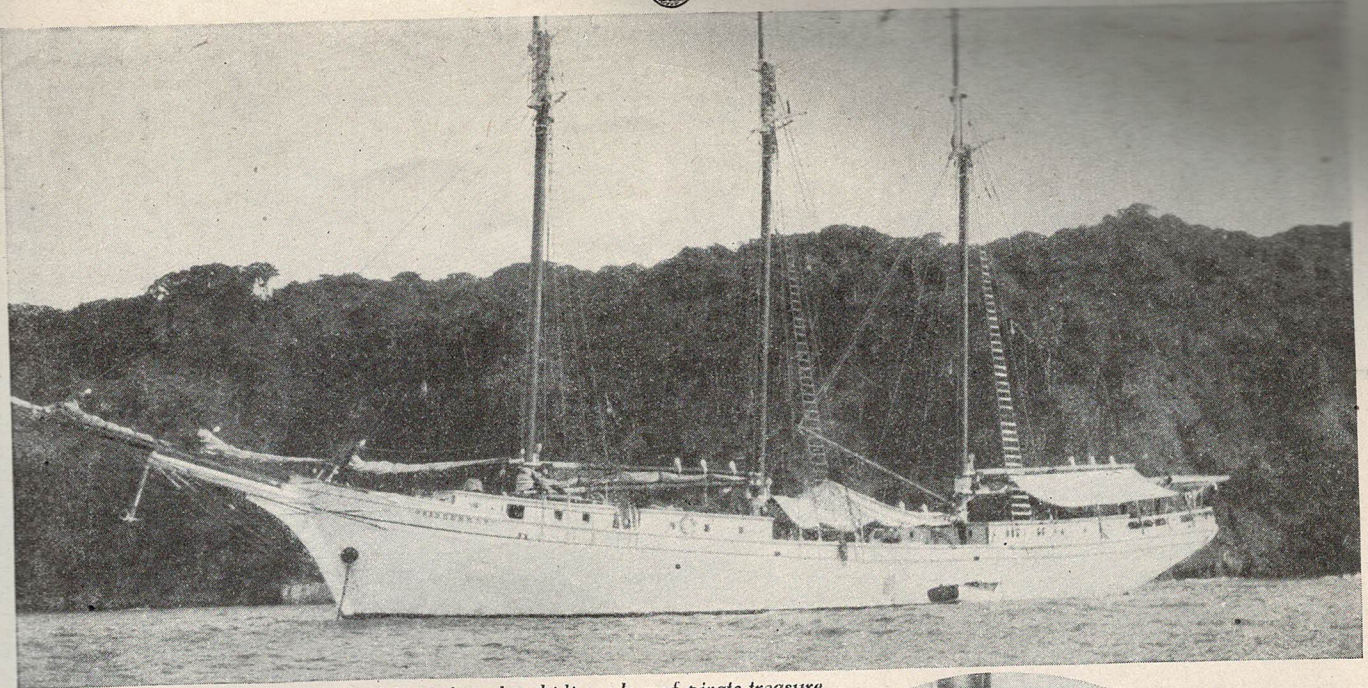
Zane Grey with his 318 pound Allison tuna, caught at Cape San Lucas.

WONDERFUL as are the Galapagos Islands I do not think I will ever again head the *Fisherman* toward that lonely ash-heap of the Pacific.

The Galapagos are volcanic in origin, directly under the equator, and five hundred miles off the coast of Ecuador. The group consists of large and small islands, green with cactus and red with lava. They are hard, forbidding, barren, desolate places—the very last, so to speak, on the globe. We fished off Indefatigable Island for a week, going ashore on occasions. The heat was intense. Many strange forms of life afforded us interest and excitement,



Landing sailfish.



The Fisherman, anchored off Cocos Island, famed as hiding place of pirate treasure.

prominent among which was the marine iguana. This was a lizard four feet long, harmless and easily captured, but very frightful-looking.

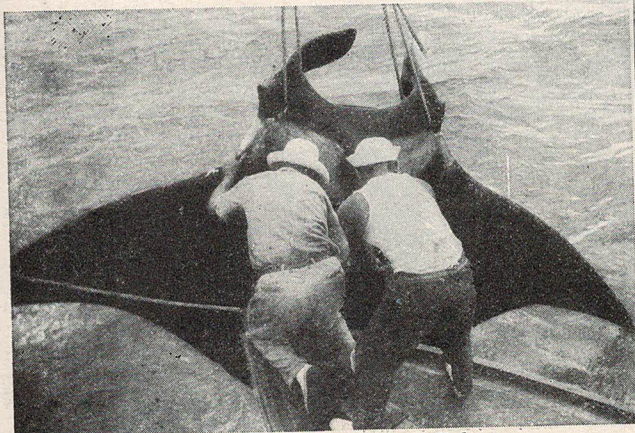
The fishing along the north shore of Indefatigable thrilled us exceedingly, though we did not find any of the great game fish of the Pacific. There was one exception to this. I caught a dolphin (properly named *coryphene*), that weighed fifty pounds, the largest I ever heard of. Yellowfin tuna, golden-spotted mackerel, and wahoo deserve mention among the numberless species we caught. We saw orca off San Salvador, and there were giant rays leaping everywhere, sometimes uncomfortably near the boats.

Tower Island, seventy miles from Indefatigable, was the most terrible spot I ever visited, infinitely worse than Death Valley. It would take a volume to tell why. We anchored in Darwin Bay, which was discovered by the great naturalist in 1836 or '38. This bay was the mouth of a crater a mile wide. Strange wild sea-fowl soared and circled and screamed in countless numbers. The bay was full of fish, but we could not catch them, owing to the sharks. Schools of black sharks, three, four, and five hundred pounds, swam around on the surface, and when we hooked a fish, which happened the instant we put a bait overboard, we were at once surrounded by these hideous sharks. They were man-eaters, judging from their disposition.

Cocos Island, famous for years as the buried-treasure island of the Pacific, presented a remarkable and beauti-

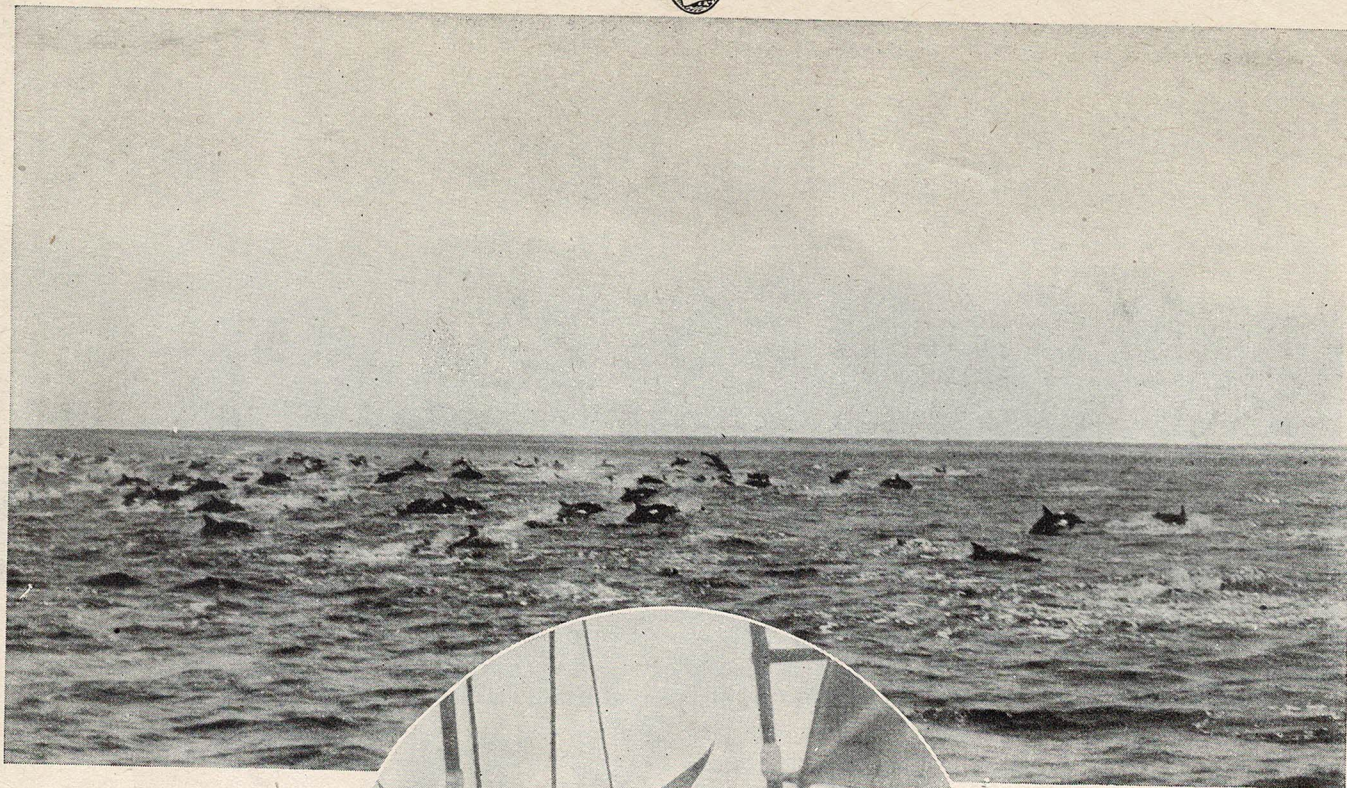


World's record sailfish. Weight 135 pounds, length 10 feet 1 inch. Caught by Zane Grey.



Giant ray or devil-fish caught at Galapagos Islands.

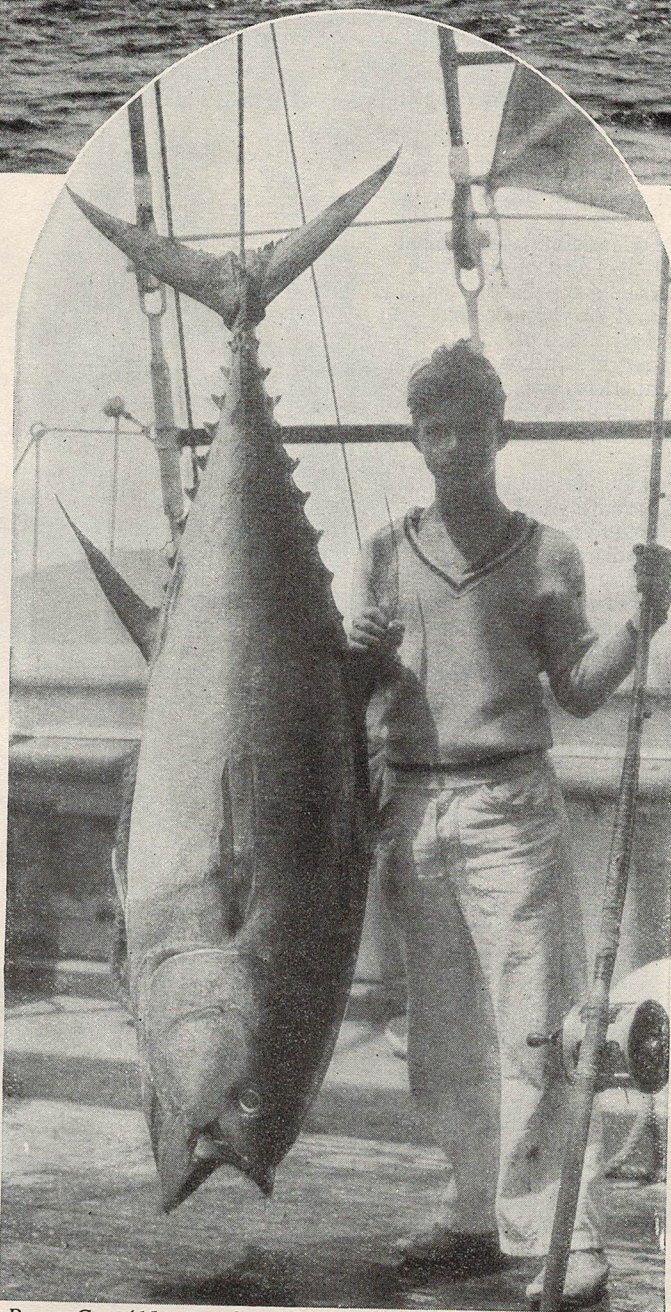
Are you doing your share in helping?



Dolphin playing on surface.

ful contrast to the Galapagos. Really very little is known about this wonderful gem of the tropic sea. In fact all we heard about it was untrue. It was reported to be a hundred and fifty miles off Costa Rica. As a matter of fact, it was over five hundred. The island was small, about thirteen miles around, rising to a mountain, and covered with the most gorgeous tropical verdure and blossoms. We smelled the fragrance of Cocos long before we reached it. Lacey white waterfalls streamed off the cliffs. The bird life was manifold and beautiful.

The number and variety of fish was incredible. We did not need any bait. Artificial lures, spoons or feathers sufficed. It was, however, an accident of luck when we got a fish to the boat. Thousands of sharks, belonging to one species, and of every size, cruised about. These sharks were bronze and yellow, very fast and savage, with pointed heads, round bodies and huge notched tails. They did not show until we hooked a fish, then they appeared as thick as fence pickets. The water was an intense blue in color, and where it was deep we scarcely ever landed a fish. Never-



Romer Grey (15 years old) with his 184 pound tuna. It took 3½ hrs. for Romer to whip this fish. Then he said "he guessed he didn't want to connect up with another."

theless we managed to catch many fish, among them tuna, bonita, crevalle, yellowtail, mackerel, and dolphin. My son, Romer, captured a fifty-pound wahoo. I was not aware that this species could be found outside of the West Indies. We saw many large Allison tuna, the long-finned species becoming well known off the Florida Keys. Some of these weighed between two and three hundred pounds. We hooked many yellowfin tuna, up to four hundred pounds, perhaps more, but the sharks would devour them in short order. In fact, the number and ferocity of the sharks made fishing there a brutal and useless experience. But for them, Cocos Island might be the greatest fishing place in the world.

The Perlos Islands, at the entrance of the great bay of Panama, afforded us all the shallow water fishing we wanted. Fish were so thick we wondered how they got enough to eat. We saw acres of red snappers swimming on the surface. We hooked amberjack and red snapper that we could not whip even on the best and strongest of tackle. In spite of all we could do, the big ones would get into the rocks. Still we caught some snappers weighing round seventy-five pounds, and amberjack close to a hundred. All species of fish grow to enormous size in these tropic waters, and are exquisitely vividly colored.

We found sailfish ranging



from the Bay of Ichuantepec to the Gulf of California. It has never before been known that sailfish are abundant in the Pacific, off the lower coast of Mexico. We saw 77 leap in one day, some of which would go two hundred pounds in weight. It took us days to learn how to catch them, and but for long Florida experience we would have failed utterly. They are finicky, tricky fish. They would rise readily to a tar-
pareno, but not one in a thousand could be hooked on these wooden plug lures. We tried them for days, and in fact tried everything, but in the end we had to resort to straight sailfishing with bait.

We caught fourteen sailfish, all over one hundred pounds, the largest of which fell to my lot, and was ten feet one inch in length and weighed a hundred and thirty-five. This is a record for both Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

This Pacific sailfish belongs to the family *Istiophorus*, characterized by a long rapier-like round bill, and a high undivided dorsal fin, commonly called a sail. It is dark blue with black dots. The Pacific sailfish differs likewise in color from his Atlantic cousin. In the water he looks gold and purple. When first pulled out he is an exquisite bronze with faint bars of varying colors. Soon he turns black.

This species is a much gamier fish than that of the Atlantic, which probably is somewhat due to the larger size. The fish are very long and slender, and when one begins his pyrotechnic leaping it is a thrilling sight. They range as far north as the Gulf of California, and we sighted a few off Cape San Lucas. I am satisfied that they go up into the Gulf in the spring. Perhaps later they work off into the Japanese current of the Pacific. I sighted three sailfish forty miles off shore.

Cape San Lucas bids fair to be the mecca for ambitious and adventurous fishermen who have time to make the long trip. It is certainly an ideal place for winter and spring fishing. The bay is beautiful and affords safe anchorage. Fish! There are infinite varieties and endless numbers. Best of all, sharks are scarce. We had some tussles with giant leopard sharks, and a hammerhead or two, but in the main sharks were conspicuously absent.

I caught one tuna that weighed three hundred and eighteen pounds and a number over two hundred. They were remarkably hard fighters, every bit as game as the famous bluefins. I concluded they are allied to the Allison tuna family. They were different somewhat from the yellowfins, sometimes caught at San Diego and Clemente Island. The long fin closely resembles that of the Allison.

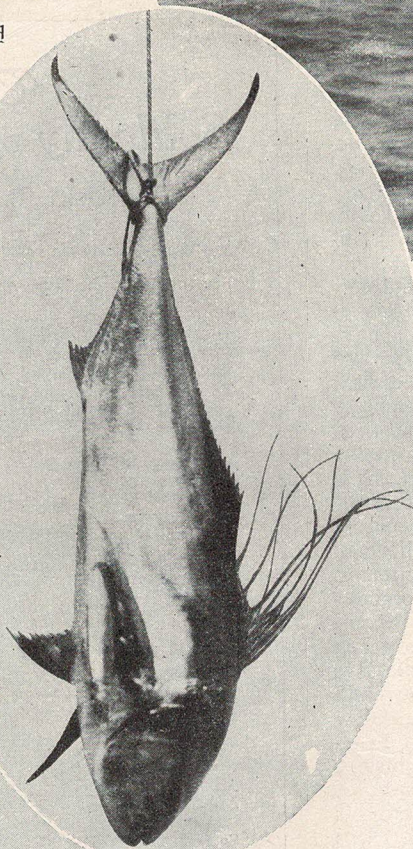
We caught seventy-nine tuna in all, which I am glad to state were gratefully accepted by the market-fishermen. They were mostly large—the average being over one hundred and fifty pounds. Kites and baits of any kind were superfluous. A white rag or feather jig was enough. These tuna struck right behind the boat, in plain sight, with terrific violence and speed. The big ones, that is, those round four hundred pounds and more, all got away. We could not hold them even with the fast launches. We saw the market-fishermen get cleaned out by big tuna, and it surely was a sight. Another angling party beside ours was sojourning at the Cape, and lost nearly a hundred feather jigs, and finally all their lines. They had to quit.

There were other fish at Cape San Lucas, when we had time for them. Romer caught two rock-bass, weighing sixty-six and seventy-five pounds. This seemed incredible to me, but if they were not rock-bass I could not classify them at all. R. C. caught a marlin sword-fish, pale blue or lavender with al-

Are you doing your share in helping?



Leaping Sailfish.



The Gallo, or Rooster fish, greatest fighter and tackle smasher of the Pacific.



Again he leaped.

most white stripes. The market-fishermen caught a black marlin that weighed six hundred and ninety pounds. What a magnificent fish! I fought one of these great black marlin for nearly five hours, only to see it get away. Big yellowtail were numerous. R. C. had a two-hour tussle with an octopus, that seized hold of the tuna on his line.

Lastly, we had a half a day's battle with a Rhineodon Typus, or whale shark, perhaps the rarest and strangest fish in the sea. Only four have ever been caught, and these were all small compared with the one we tackled. It was twice as long as my twenty-five foot launch, and considerably wider. We estimated its weight to be twenty tons. It whipped both our boats and crews in a fair fight, and got away. After that we saw several, and we learned of one having been netted by a Japanese fishing boat. It was fifty-four feet long. Being unaware of its great scientific value they left this Rhineodon go free.

Zane Grey's marvelous descriptive powers make his stories things of beauty to brighten the prosaic existence most of us live. Fishing Virgin Seas is particularly fascinating. Other magazines would have paid Mr. Grey an enormous sum for this—yet he donates it to OUTDOOR AMERICA, as his part in the League's program to save America's out of doors.