

CALIFORNIA GAME FISH: HOW LONG WILL THEY LAST?

by Zane Grey

with a forward by
Loren Grey, Ph.D.

(The editor of the Zane Grey Collector is grateful to Dr. Loren Grey for permitting publication of this article by Zane Grey. It appears here in published form for the first time.)

FORWARD

by Loren Grey

As far as we have been able to ascertain, this article was written sometime during the middle 1920's not long before Zane Grey left California fishing waters for good. At the time he wrote this article it was "too hot to handle", and to our knowledge it was never published. We only recently found the written manuscript among some of the effects that were moved from the Altadena house when it was sold in December, 1970.

What is most interesting -- and perhaps tragically so -- is how prophetic he was. The Sardines are gone, the Blue Fin Tuna are gone, the Mackeral are nearly gone, the Yellowtail and Barracuda no longer exist in the marketable numbers and have disappeared from our dinner tables except in cases where sport fishermen are able to catch a few on the fishing boats. The Albacore still exist only because of a peculiarity they have which the net boats are aware of but few others are, and that is if you try to put a round-haul net around a school of Albacore they will immediately sound before the net can be closed. And, ironically enough, the Broadbill Swordfish may be spared from extinction only because the mercury count is so high that it may be unsafe to eat any more.

At least in California, the thin blue line separating ocean sport fishing from extinction is the Anchovies, which still exist in sufficient numbers to lure migratory schools of game fish from Mexico and out-to-sea waters during the summer. But as was done with the Sardines back in the years about which my father wrote, the commercial interests now want to do with the Anchovies -- grind them up for fertilizer.

If the conservationists lose this fight, there will be no more game fish in California as my father more than 40 years ago predicted would eventually happen.

For that matter, it seems to be a race between whether we will decimate the fish population in the oceans by over-fishing or by polluting the waters until they all die from that cause. At least some alarm is being felt and voiced here and there about the danger. But, as this article vividly shows, there were some prophetic conservationists

who had the foresight to try to warn us about these dangers long before anyone knew what the word ecology meant or had the faintest notion that we may be one of the endangered species about which so much is being written today.

CALIFORNIA GAME FISH: HOW LONG WILL THEY LAST?

by Zane Grey

It makes me see red to read the old bunk that the commercial fish interest publish in opposition to the California conservationists.

The old gag! A few millionaire sportsmen fighting the great fishpacking industry of California! A few club fishermen trying to corral all the game fish for themselves, to the detriment of the people and the injury of business, the market fisherman, canneries and banks!

If this did not make me so sore I would have to laugh. It is funny. It is their slogan and they work it to death for the simple reason that they have no other. It sounds well. It goes over big with the public. It gets the support of the politicians, bankers, and the chambers of commerce.

But it is untrue. This is the old stuff that was always flagrantly published when a few number of a local fishing club tried to start something. But there is a vast difference between a few millionaire anglers and one hundred and fifty thousand California conservationists. For that matter, where are these few millionaire anglers who are bearing the brunt of this bluff? I don't know them. I am certainly not one of them. Neither am I a member of any fishing club, and I have quit fishing in California waters because most of the real game fish are gone.

The California conservationists have arrived late, maybe too late to save the game and fish, but they have arrived! And we want it distinctly understood that we are fighting for California and for our children and grandchildren, to the end of saving something of California's wild life for them to enjoy and to live with. This is the main issue. The fish are only a part of it. We want it distinctly understood that we are not going to put this great conservation thing over for sportsmen, but for the people of California.

When I first came to California in 1914, fish was cheap in the markets. Lately it has risen to 35 cents a pound, and stayed there at times when the market-fishermen had to dump tons of fresh fish because the packers and canners and dealers refused to buy more. Presently the price will go higher and higher, and presently it will be 75 cents a pound, and eventually only the rich can eat fish at all.

There has been a forty percent increase in the consumption of fish. What increase there has been in the bagging and wasting of fish would be difficult to state. But it has been tremendous, all out of reason.

I can convince any honest man that if something is not done to stop this wholesale slaughter of fish very soon there will be no fish left.

How do I know this and how can I prove it? Because for thirty years I have been scientifically and otherwise a student of fish and fishing, and I know.

I saw the Menhaden, the Bluefish, and the Mackerel disappear from the Atlantic Coast. I saw the Kingfish and Mackerel get scarce in Florida waters. And off California, I have seen the White Sea Bass, the Yellowtail, the Albacore and the Blue Fin Tuna, once numbering countless millions, vanish as if by magic. They are gone. They will never return in any quantity. The net-boats have cleaned them out. There was a law passed to prevent net-boats from netting inside the three-mile limit. Did it operate? Ha! Ha! It did not! I have seen hundreds of net boats, many, many times, netting fish close to the shores of Catalina and California. I have seen them break the law with the State's Fish and Game launch moored at the dock in plain sight. A hundred times I have seen this. It was a joke among anglers and market fishermen alike. During the war I was shot at by Austrian netters while I was photographing them flagrantly breaking the law. When there was a great hue and cry raised by Avalon (Catalina Island) residents, the wardens could arrest a few netters and blow great guns about it in the newspapers. Somebody would pay the fines of the fishermen and next day, they would be back on the job. And there you are. That settled the Sea Lions, the Yellowtail, the Albacore and the Tuna. The Japanese fishermen, of course, had most to do with the catching of Albacore, and as far as the Albacore are concerned, mostly this was done with hook and line. But the result was the same. The last day I went Sword-Fishing in California waters, I counted 165 Japanese boats in sight.

The Mackerel have grown scarcer every year. The Rock Bass are almost gone. The next to go will be the Barracuda, if they do not leave these waters before they are gutted out too. One day in 1927, an Avalon boatman ran into a school

of Barracuda at Church Rock, round the corner from Avalon. He caught 14, a big catch for a boatman these days. He ran back to tell the good news to the other boatmen, who certainly needed a little work! They went, and that day fishing was good. Next morning a net-boat dropped a net at Church Rock, almost a hundred yards from shore, and took 20 tons of Barracuda in one haul.

What is back of these net-boats anyway?

The barracuda will go soon, if they do not leave these waters, and they will leave them if the sardines are all caught. Which they soon will be! Years ago the schools of sardines were endless. I sat in a launch with Charley Gardner while a school of sardines passed around us. They took half a day to pass. The school might have been twenty miles long. Where are such schools of sardines now? Gone! Gone into fertilizer and oil — to make a few packers and canners rich.

Where do the people of California get off here? If this wholesale slaughter of sardines is allowed to go on indefinitely, not only the sardines will be gone, but the barracuda, the mackerel, the skip jack, that feed on sardines will be gone too. It is ridiculous for some canner's lobbyist or politician to attempt to tell me anything about fish, or spawning, or depletion. These are things I have studied purely for the love of nature. They know less than nothing about the natural history of marine life. Absolutely the most imperative necessity is to stop the canners from making fertilizer and oil out of sardines. In my judgement this is as great a harm to the people of California as the wholesale cutting of timber in our forests, that preposterous and greedy practice so long prevalent.

The Swordfish question is of no great importance compared to that of the netting of barracuda and sardines. Nevertheless, it needs to be brought out. Californians eat very little swordfish. There is scarcely any sale here whatsoever. Now and then at the Biltmore or the Ambassador or St. Catherine you might see swordfish on the bill of fare, but it is the exception.

One of the packers shipped 90,000 pounds of broadbill swordfish to the east last year alone, 90,000 pounds! What good did this do California? What value have a few dollars to transportation or marketmen compared to the value of 45 tons

of this grand fish, to all that is meant by California? The only possible excuse for that massacre of the greatest fish in the seas, the king of them all, was to swell the bank account of this packer. And I would like to know the benefit to us.

On the other hand, the broadbill, being the last of California's game fish, has a distinct and absolutely true value to the state. You will see in the yearly booklets of the Times, in Wrigley's advertisements of Catalina Island, and in many lesser channels, the exploitation of Xiphylus Gladius, the broadbill swordfish, greatest of all fish for anglers.

Just how much good the Times and swordfish advertising has done California I would hesitate to state, for fear of exaggeration. But it has been very considerable. I could name many men besides myself who were brought first to California to fish, and remained to take up homes here.

But aside from the anglers, when I protest I am not exaggerating when I say that there is a crying need to protect broadbill swordfish from market-fishermen. And I base every case and make every plea solely on the assumption that glorious California should not be commercialized in petty little ways like that.

Californians are proud of the golden State and well they may be. The sunshine, the fruit, the wonderful roads, the beautiful home-sites, the lure of Hollywood, the blue Pacific — all of these are California's assets. Without them California would not be any better than any other state. And I place the fish second only to this.

Continued from Page 12

BOOK TALK

by G. M. Farley

even though it is not the most ethical practice in business to change the names of his already familiar works.

I hope to see you publish a lot more of his work in paperback, but I hope to see it done with honor.

Sincerely,

Rev. G. M. Farley

THE ZANE GREY COLLECTOR

NOTE: The *TENDERFOOT* has three stories, (1) Excerpts from the latter part of *THE DUDE RANGER*, (2) Excerpts from *WILDERNESS TREK* entitled "Lost in the Never Never", and the now very familiar and always beautiful story "The Secret of Quaking Asp Cabin". *TENDERFOOT* is a must for Zane Grey collectors, simply because, like some of the other recent Belmont Tower releases, it adds another title to our shelves. It has no other value.

S. G. BLUE TAKES A LOOK AT NEW PUBLICATIONS

PIONEER HUNTERS OF THE RIM — Myrtle Branstetter, Norm's Publishing House, Mesa, Arizona, 1976, 84 pages (Hardcover)

Even though this is probably the poorest example of writing you will ever find in a hardcover, you will still be well-compensated because of the wealth of information it contains. Myrtle Branstetter was the daughter of "Babe" Haught, the man who introduced Zane Grey to bear hunting on the Tonto Rim. Apparently some of the book was copied verbatim from Haught's notes and other portions were added from Mrs. Branstetter's wealth of memories. In spite of this the book gives a picture of the Tonto Basin when only a few white men lived there. The book deals at length with Zane Grey and answers a few questions that interest Zane Grey fans. There are also some pictures of Grey included among the 34 photographs.

You can order a hardcover copy for \$11.00 or a paperback copy for \$4.75 from Myrtle Branstetter, General Delivery, Mimbres, New Mexico, 88049.

THE WESTERNER — Zane Grey, Edited by Loren Z. Grey, Belmont Tower Books, New York, 1977, 124 pages, (Paperback)

Like any other writer Zane Grey wrote some material which was never submitted to a publisher. *THE WESTERNER* seems to be one of several manuscripts laid aside, possibly for re-writing, and forgotten. It is not a good story,

even though the plot has some possibilities. It is filled with entirely too many coincidences to be plausible, and the pace of the story is far too fast for proper development. It almost becomes a comedy of accidental circumstances. Combined with this the style of writing takes a form, at times suggesting that a hand other than Zane Grey's lay heavily upon this story. Yet I believe it was written by Zane Grey.

There are phrases common to Grey's earlier writing, and in one instance he vents his wrath upon the Germans. This leads me to believe that the story was written after Adolph Hitler began his rape of Europe. Several of Grey's novels were anti-German, and references are not uncommon in his outdoor works.

THE WESTERNER is probably a story which, once written, did not meet the author's standards, nor the approval of his wife, Dolly, who did his editing and revising, and it was simply filed for future reference. However, it is a welcome addition to a Zane Grey collection, and it is good to have something new by Zane Grey, even though it doesn't compare with *RIDERS OF THE PURPLE SAGE* or *ROBBER'S ROOST*.

THE FABULOUS HOLTS — Buck Ralney, Western Collector Press, Nashville, Tennessee, 1976, 215 pages (Large paperback)

In *THE FABULOUS HOLTS* Buck Ralney, an active member of the Western Writers of America, has produced a well-written, well-researched book on the lives of Jack Holt, his son Tim Holt, and daughter Jennifer Holt. It is a moving story of love, family ties, separation, heartbreak, and success. There is only one photograph of Zane Grey and several mentions of his name in connection with his movies in which the Holts starred — hardly worthwhile if a person wants it solely for what is said about Grey. But as a treasure trove of information about the Holts and the movie industry of that era, it is worth owning. I heartily recommend it.

For prices write to: Western Film Collector Press, P.O. Box 17509, Nashville, Tennessee 37217.

BETTY ZANE — Georgia Golden Heaster, McClean Printing Co., Parsons, W. Va., 1976, 80 pages, (Clothbound), \$6.00

This well-written fictionalized version of two episodes in the life of the famous heroine of Fort Henry will be a welcome addition to your collection of frontier literature. The author brings to life the little known episode in which Betty Zane stole the horses of a group of Hessian soldiers and delivered them to George Washington's army. Of course, the gunpowder episode is covered, and a lot of little-known facts surrounding the event included. Lewis Wetzel, for the first time in his proper perspective, is not ignored.

Georgia Heaster has treated the subject nicely, but not with her full capabilities, and I personally hope to see more and larger historical works from her pen.

For information, write to Georgia Golden Heaster, Route 7, Box 222AA, Morgantown, W. Va. 26505.

Write 3/1/85

SUBSCRIBE TO
THE ZANE GREY COLLECTOR
\$5.00 FOR 4 ISSUES

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

COMMENTS: _____

FILL IN THIS FORM & MAIL WITH \$5 TO:

EUGENE HARTNELL
P.O. Box 1910
Huntington Beach, California 92647