

A NOTE ON THE BREEDING HABITS OF THE COMMON OR WHITE SUCKER.

BY GLENN CULBERTSON.

While fishing on Big Creek in Jefferson County, Ind., last April the writer had an opportunity to observe at short range the spawning habits of the common White Sucker (*Catostomus teres*). It is the habit of this fish to spawn in the swiftly flowing water of ripples rather than in the still water of pools, and if I am not mistaken during the night rather than the day.

In the case under observation there was a school of suckers, some twenty or twenty-five in number, and ranging in size from nine or ten inches to thirteen or fourteen inches in length. The location was a short reach of swift water some three or four inches in depth, between two large pools. The ripple was close to a steep bank and was overhung by the branches of trees, making the place rather dark even at noon. The fish with few exceptions were constantly swimming about, now in the deeper water and, again for a short time in the shallow water of the ripples. A few were lying quietly on the bottom in the swift water.

My attention on observing the school for a few minutes was soon attracted to a large female, thirteen or fourteen inches in length and two males about ten or eleven inches long. Whenever this particular female swam from the pool above down into the swift water, the two males, which always swam approximately side by side, and some five or six inches apart, would endeavor to pass one on either side of the female. In the one case where the actual spawning occurred, the two males reached positions close to and on either side of the female and with the anterior portions of their heads some two inches farther back than that of the female, the heads of all being upstream. While thus stationary in this position the males struck the female each with head and then tail, alternately, and with great rapidity. This motion was continued some four or five seconds. At the same time, the swift water of the ripple below the spawning fish became of a milky white color, due to the spermatie fluid of the males. On taking the same female a few minutes later the

spawn was found to be abundant and to pass very readily from the body. On taking two or three of the males the usually smooth portion of the heads was found to be covered with numerous tubercles from one to two millimeters long. The tail fins of the males were also found with rows of similar tubercles along the rays. No tubercles were found on the female.

The spawn could have done nothing else than to have floated off into the still water of the pool below, where some may have found lodgment among the water plants.

Whether polyandry, or perhaps more exactly diandry, if the term may be so used, is always the habit of the female sucker I am unable to say, but in this case it certainly was.

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