

Article XIV.—A NOTE ON *SIPHOSTOMA PELAGICUM*  
(OSBECK).

BY JOHN TREADWELL NICHOLS.

Jordan and Evermann in Bulletin 47 of the U. S. National Museum give the range of *Siphostoma pelagicum* as: "Tropical parts of the Atlantic; occasional in the West Indies; very common in the Mediterranean." Later (p. 2837) the validity of the West Indian records is questioned. This leaves the western limits of the interesting range of the fish practically indeterminate. The collections of the American Museum of Natural History contain a series from drifting Gulf weed in the Atlantic, which helps to define these limits. They were collected from a ship bound from New York out across the Equator. The fishes are from 32° N., 43° W. (1 ♂); 32° N., 42° W. (2 ♀); 32° N., 41° W. (2 ♂ 1 ♀); 31° N., 40° W. (1 ♀); 30° N., 39° W. (1 ♂ 1 ♀); 29° N., 38° W. (3 ♀). The stations are marked (•) on the accompanying sketch chart which has ocean currents indicated by arrows. On the chart are also marked (x) the localities where *Pterophryne histrio* was obtained, as the relationship between the ranges of the two species is interesting. Both were taken at one station, 32° N., 43° W. Just beyond our most southeasterly station for *S. pelagicum* the ship from which collecting was being done experienced fresh trade winds which made further examination of the weed and its fauna impossible, and almost immediately the weed itself, which had been such a prominent feature of the ocean's surface since leaving the coast, disappeared. Both the Pipe Fish and Mouse Fish hide in the drifting *Sargassum* which they resemble so closely as to escape the notice of predaceous fishes. Their habits are then sufficiently alike to probably bring them into competition.

With our specimens of *S. pelagicum* are careful color notes taken when they were fresh from the water. The fish were for the most part pale brownish olive, more or less banded, very variable, but with certain constant marks, as a dark mark at the top of the gill cover. Below this the gill cover is white with two or three yellow or bronze marks. A longitudinal dark mark in front of the eye, and a white blotch near the base of the pectoral fin. Iris generally bronze with a tendency to white below. Vertical white bars on the sides prominent in the female. A well marked male fish had the following colors: Pale brownish olive above. About twelve pale bands across the back, margined in front with dark. Sides anteriorly with short vertical whitish bars alternating with whitish dots, giving a chequered

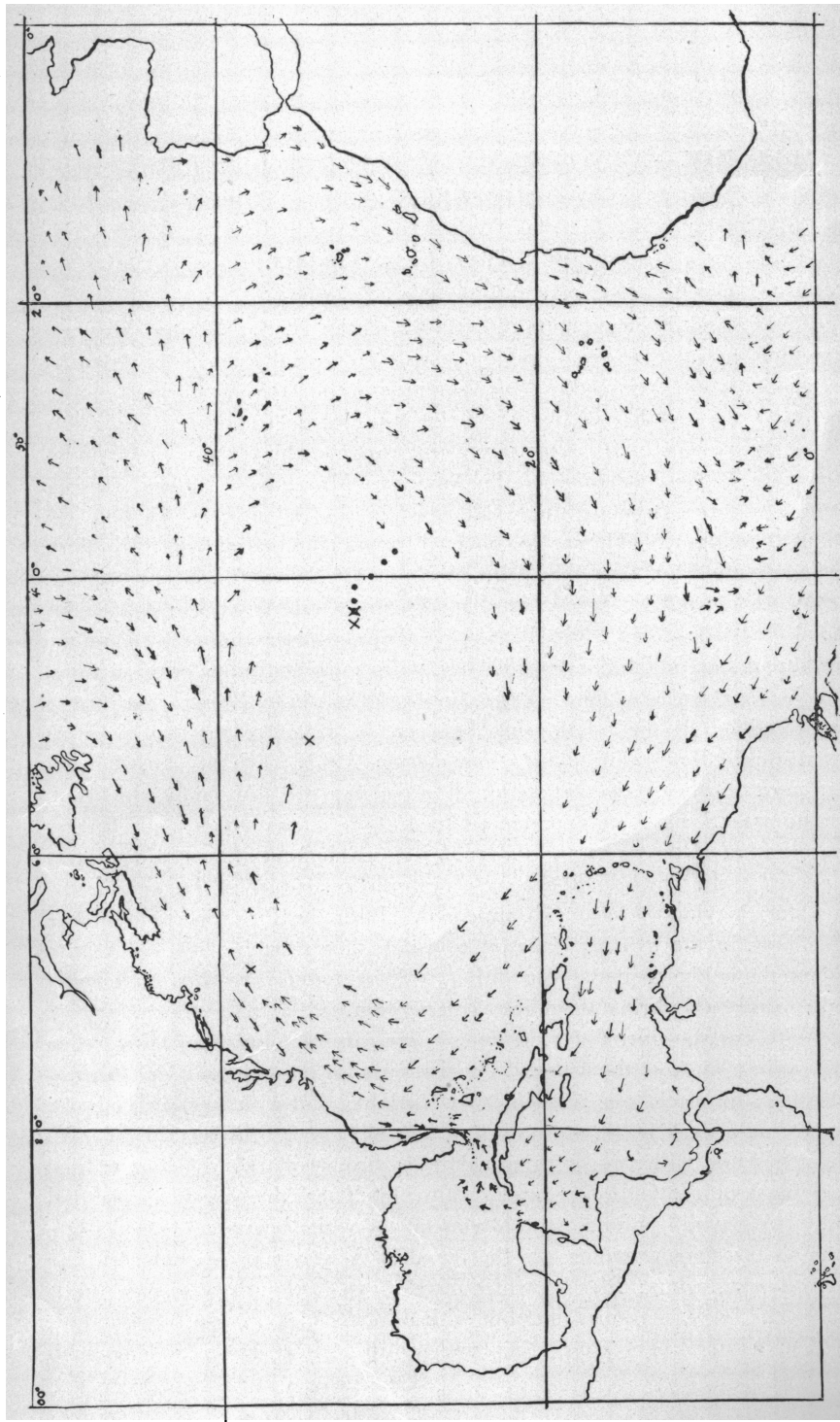


Chart of North Atlantic showing points of capture of *Siphonotoma pelagicum* (•) and *Pterophryne histrio* (X).

appearance. (Another specimen had a row of obscure white marks on the sides.) A row of dark marks at each of the two angles of the ventral surface, which anteriorly alternated with the whitish bars, becoming the dark spaces between them on the sides. Dorsal pale with five or six darker marks at its very base. A well marked female fish had the following colors: Pale brownish olive, paler below. Sides with narrow vertical white bands, best defined ventrally, which broadened and faded posteriorly into the lighter spaces between darker bands. A few of these dark bands were decidedly darker than the rest. Still further back the dark bands became imperfect. (In another fish some of the whitish lateral bars extended, faded, across the back to form about thirteen pale bands, each margined in front by darker. This same specimen had the anterior ventral parts yellow.) Dorsal fin pale with vertical marks of darker. A single female fish had the following aberrant coloration: above mottled with blackish, grayish brown and gray, the colors arranged more or less in darker and lighter cross-bands. Marks on the white gill-cover area greenish instead of bronze or yellow. Iris dark, more or less mottled above, white below. Caudal spotted with blackish and whitish at its two edges.

