

VII.—OBSERVATIONS ON A FISH (*Chylomycterus schæpfi*) NEW
TO THE FAUNA OF NOVA SCOTIA. BY HARRY PIERS.

(Read May 8th, 1899.)

In the summer of about 1896 a curious fish was brought to the Provincial Museum by a fisherman who had taken it in deep water off Sambro near Halifax.

At Dr. Gilpin's request I examined the specimen and found that it belonged to the species *Chylomycterus schæpfi*, (Walbaum) which is the same as *Chilomycterus geometricus*, Kaup, and *Diodon maculostriatus*, Mitchell. It is variously known as the Common Burr-fish, Rabbit-fish, Swell-toad, or Swell-fish. The specific name *schæpfi* was given it in honour of its discoverer, Dr. Johann David Schöpf, a Hessian surgeon in the American revolutionary war and a noted botanical collector.

It is a small, elliptical-oval shaped species of remarkable appearance. The bones of the upper and lower jaws are confluent, forming a short beak with a trenchant edge, without teeth. Unlike those of the Tetrodons, these plates are without a median suture. The body is covered with short, stout, triangular, dermal spines, each with three roots and consequently immovable. It is thus well protected from enemies, and would prove a thorny morsel to any marine animal foolish enough to capture it.

When fresh from the water the upper parts are greenish-black with a series of undulating blackish stripes running from the head backward; a similar series between eyes and across face; an ocellated black spot above pectoral; a larger one behind the same fin; another ocellated spot at the base of the dorsal, with a smaller spot below it. The specimen has now lost much of its colour in alcohol, but the markings may still be traced.

Length 3 inches*, of which the tail forms about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch. Fin rays: dorsal, 12; pectoral, 21; anal, about 10; caudal, 9.

This species has not previously been taken in Nova Scotian waters, in fact it has never hitherto been captured so far north. According to Jordan and Evermann (Fishes of North and Middle America, 1898), its range is from Cape Cod to Florida. It is very abundant southward in shallow water, being particularly plentiful on the coast of the Carolinas and Florida.

C. schœpfi belongs to the *Diodontidae* family (Porcupine Fishes), all the members of which are sluggish, living on the bottom among weeds and corals, in tropical seas. When disturbed, they swallow air until considerably inflated, and then float belly upward on the water. In such a condition they could be easily driven before the wind. They are popularly regarded as poisonous.

* The usual length is from 6 to 10 inches.