



A NATIONAL FILM BOARD

Release

THE NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA, MONTREAL

Cameraman: Ray Jones

Prod. No. 61-321-6

Cable Code: CAPLIN
Cable Address: Newsreels,
Canadafilm, Montreal.

THE CAPLIN ROLL

.....

THE CAPLIN -- ITS WASH ASHORE FOR SPAWNING AND RETURN
TO THE SEA -- A ROLLING PROCESS BY THE WAVES

.....

Middle Cove (near Torbay),
Newfoundland, July, 1961

Recipe for a caplin roll -- to a calm evening in
June, add a generous dash of mist, mix in a tide over almost any
beach in Newfoundland, and garnish with wan light. Blended in
reasonably proportionate quantities, these ingredients produce a
feast of spring that is guaranteed to provide an incalculable
number of servings, as it has for centuries past and undoubtedly
will for centuries to come. For this is the time, these are the
most favourable conditions, of the caplin "scull" when countless
numbers of these small (6-7" in length), silver-sided fish,
invading the beaches to spawn, are landed in enormous quantities.

Spawning begins earliest in the warmest water
areas, the south coast and southern part of the west coast of
Newfoundland and may commence as early as the last few days in
May. In cooler waters of the east coast (the setting of our story),
spawning usually reaches its peak during the latter part of June
and extends into the first week or two in July.

Fine gravel from a tenth to a half-inch in
diameter is especially good for heavy spawning; however, spawning
also occurs on sandy or coarse gravel strands. The obvious
advantage of small gravel is that the spawning motions on the
beach can bury the eggs somewhat in fine gravel whereas this
could not be well accomplished in fine closely packed sand or
large pebbles. Most of the burying of eggs, however, is
accomplished by the waves, and the beach at the end of mass spawn-
ing is usually a quivering mass of gravel and attached eggs, a
foot or more deep.

The caplin, known elsewhere than in Newfoundland
as "capelin", come in close to shore for spawning and let the
waves carry them ashore. When the spawning motion is over, the
waves pick them up and carry them off shore and then they swim
vigorously out to sea. The caplin are unpredictable in that they
come in anytime during the day or night and, when they arrive, the
call goes out to fishermen who rush down to shore with their nets.

.....

During the height of the caplin season, it is not unusual to see schools of cod -- normally a rather sluggish, bottom feeding fish -- churning the surface with rare vigour in pursuing and gorging on caplin. This feeding brings the cod right in to the base of the cliffs, almost to the edge of the beach, where they may even be taken on angling gear. Cod fishing is the backbone of the Newfoundland fishing industry.

The caplin, in its natural habitat, provides food for other marine species such as salmon, seals, whales and flatfishes; and for sea birds. In addition, fairly large quantities of caplin are frozen and held in cold storage for use by fishermen in other seasons when fresh bait is not obtainable from the sea. Out of the water, where it spawns in large numbers it is an important source of fertilizer for the hay and potato crops. On certain sections of the coast it is lightly salted and dried to feed dogteams used for winter travel and general transportation purposes. As an item for the family larder, it makes a worthwhile contribution to the diet of thousands of Newfoundlanders being eaten and enjoyed fresh from the sea, frozen, "corned" (salted and dried), and smoked. Experimentation by one producer several years ago showed that caplin are suitable for canning for human consumption while another processor markets it in similar containers as a cat food.

Every member of the fisherman's family can take part in the simplest method of catching caplin -- the dip net. This consists merely of standing on the beach and scooping up the caplin as they roll in with the waves. Another method involves the use of a cast net, which is a circular, rather fine-mesh net having small leaden balls threaded on the peripheral rope. The fisherman, standing in the wash, casts the net by hand over the shoal of fish and retrieves it by means of a drawstring which draws the net together, enclosing the fish. Cast nets are, also, used from boats when the caplin are lying in deeper water.

When the fish are caught, they are loaded into a barrel and carried, stretcher style, to a horse-drawn cart to be taken to a central stockpile.

1. LS shoreline (Middle Cove), fisherman in background
2. MS waves bringing caplin into rocky shore
3. MCU pan over caplin in water
4. MLS two fishermen, pan right to left to one casting weighted net and hauling in catch
5. MS caplin rolling in with wave and being left on beach to spawn
6. MS man casting net and bringing in same
7. MS caplin coming in (towards camera) on waves
8. MCU caplin getting thicker in water, net - tilt up to fisherman
9. MS two men carrying barrel - stretcher style
10. MS caplin in water, net being hauled in
11. MCU caplin in net
12. MS man casting net and carrying catch to partner, tilt down to caplin
13. MCU casting
14. CU caplin spawning - waves
15. MCU emptying net into barrel
16. MCU barrel full
17. MS two fishermen carrying barrel
18. MCU caplin being left to spawn