

SEALS AND SEA LIONS—THEIR PHYSIOLOGY AND TOPOLOGY.

Seals and sea lions flock together in the winter time and go south, and in the summer north. The seal lives on the sea cabbage. During the spring, from the 15th of April, they settle in myriads in Behring's Copper, Biljine, Andreanovki, Fox, St. Paul's and St. George's Islands. The male seal or sea lion, in the spring guards more than two hundred females. The sea lion is very large, and is then about five years old. It has great influence over the herd of females. It seeks out the highest rock on the coast, where it can rest or play. We ask traders why they have gone north to kill these animals. They say because they were so troublesome that they disturbed the peace of San Francisco, or for the purpose of exterminating them? The reply has been given us, "only for commerce." If, then, for commerce, we will write from a commercial standpoint.

A trained and skillful hunter will never kill the seal while it is on the rocks, because they know that it would drive away the seals. If the seal dies a natural death, or in war, which often prevails among these animals, it makes no impression among the seals, unless they smell their own blood, when they become frightened and plunge again into the sea.

Seals give birth to young in the month of September, and the rocks are then covered with the pups. They never have more than two in a litter. Their voices resemble the bleating of young lambs. They are suckled by the mother until they are able to go into the water, when they are required to look out for themselves. For economical reasons these animals should not be molested until the month of September. If the breeding females are driven away they will lose their pups. The old males should be killed in September, for the oil is more valuable than their fur. It is worth seventy-five cents per gallon. The meat is salted and eaten by the inhabitants of the different islands. The bones are also put to good use.

The Americans trading in Alaska last summer did not pay any attention to the seal oil. They all went after furs. The oil of 400,000 seals was thrown into the stream. An individual who was employed last summer at St. Paul's Island, spoke of the many thousands of dollars thrown into the stream. It is the best oil for machinery and lamps. Congress made regulations to protect the seals without knowing the habits or physiology of this animal. All its attention has been paid to St. Paul's and St. George's Islands. In this bill of protection no mention is made of the other islands, such as Biljine, Andreanovki and Fox Islands. Congress has never paid any attention to these islands, and greedy traders will exterminate the whole race of these animals which are in thousands from Alaska to Alaska, with firearms or any weapon that they have. There has never been any improvement made in seal hunting. Congress would like to protect the seal in the same manner that the old Russo-American company did, which was the most ignorant and conservative conceivable.

After our investigation, we give such knowledge as we possess about the manner in which this animal is killed. Seals go up on the beach in foggy weather or in the evening. They are so fat that on hot days they prefer the water. After sunset the Aleuts drive them into the mountains; then they separate the females and young ones from the males, kill all the males, and drive the other portion back into the sea. The male seal should be killed when it is one year old, and in the months of September and October, for their fur is very valuable in these two months and at that period of their life. One firm last summer, had 40,000 females one year old, killed in August and September, for they were aware that the fur was very valuable at that time. After they are three years old their fur is not so valuable. After the seal is skinned the fat should be carefully taken from the skin, then salted and put in barrels. To preserve one seal skin it takes eight pounds of salt. No more can be killed than can be preserved in one day, because the fat eats up the fur. The dressing of the seal is done altogether in England. If it is not carefully prepared, when passing the tropics the fat destroys the fur. These seals, at the end of October and the early part of November, emigrate to the southwest or to the Japanese Islands. They are not afraid of ice, but prefer a milder climate in the winter season. We are certain, from some stated facts, that they make this place their abode during the winter. The Japanese use their skins for winter garments.

These seals are the size of a seal, and is similar to the seal in habits. Shooting is the manner in which they are killed. Great attention must be paid in the killing of the seal lion, as one spent ball will frighten the whole herd into the sea. The meat is much liked by the natives. The fat gives a good oil and the hide is valuable and used for many purposes. The natives of Alaska use the hide to make barks or boats for their own use. Many beautiful and valuable fur-bearing animals living in the water and on the land, are found at St. Lawrence and St. Matthew's Islands. We have seen some skins from St. Lawrence as large as the leopard, and of the same form, spotted black and white, and as soft as the sable. There are in the northern regions numerous species of fur-bearing animals which live on land and water—sea lion, sea bear, sea elephant, sea mink, bearded seal, crested seal, etc.—San Francisco Herald.

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