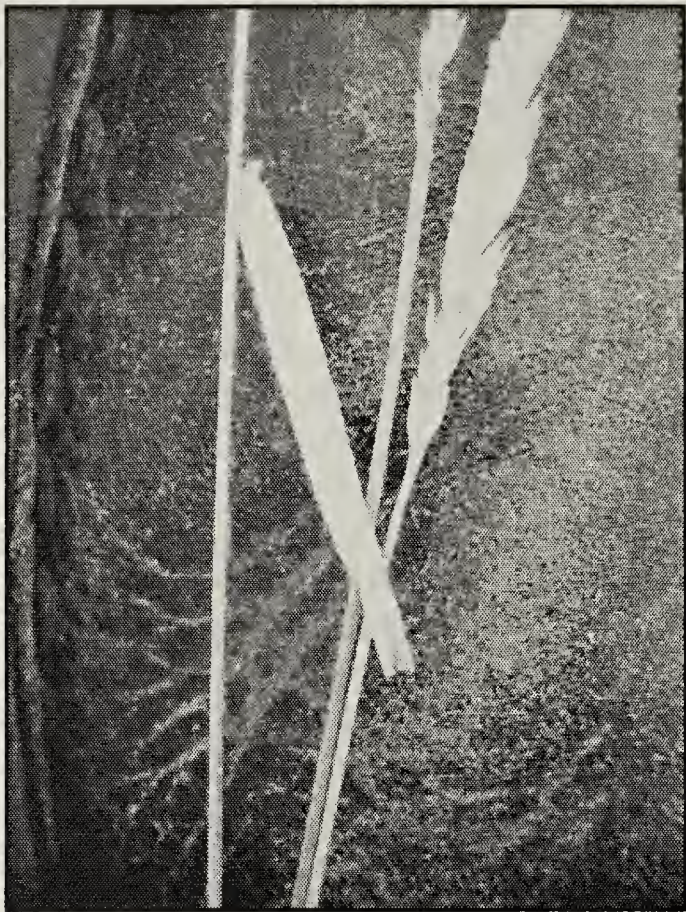


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# MYSTERY PHOTO

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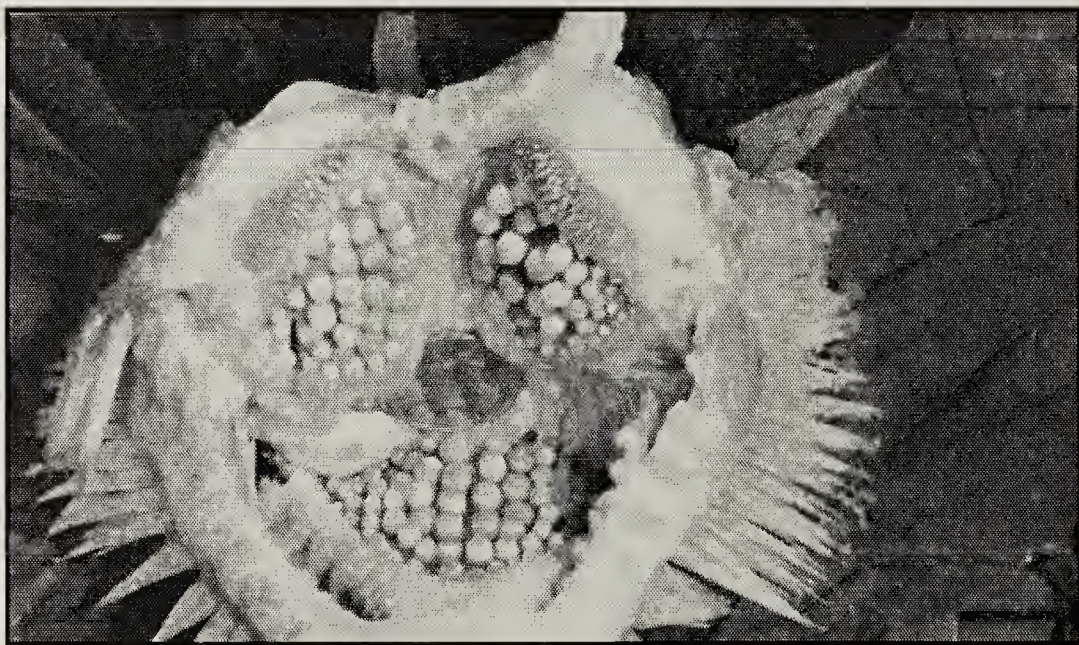
## MARCH MYSTERY PHOTO



Who attaches a slender papery case to low vegetation in grassland regions? This one, about 3 cm long and empty, was photographed near Harris SK on 12 August 2003.

## ANSWER TO THE DECEMBER MYSTERY PHOTO

The fish whose mouth you peer into is a Freshwater Drum (also known as Silver Bass, sheepshead and grunter, *Aplodinotus grunniens*). This fish has three sets of teeth (the many round and white cylinders that look a lot like human molars) designed to crush clams and snails, natural food items for the larger fish, especially those living in rivers. The teeth are attached to three fused pharyngeal arches that surround the opening to the stomach, here covered with a dime.



The fish pictured is a 66 cm long Freshwater Drum caught by angler Fern Clyde in the Valley River near Lake Dauphin, Manitoba in 2004. The photograph and the information about this fish was provided by William J. Walley of Dauphin, Manitoba.

No one hazarded a guess about the kind of fish and what it ate. Was this because we presented misinformation in the description?

Apparently this fish is *not* found in Saskatchewan as we learned from Kevin Murphy of the Resource Stewardship Branch of Saskatchewan Environment. Regarding the disjunct population that has been reported to occur in southwestern Saskatchewan, Kevin writes:

“The situation as I have come to understand it is this. Scott and Crossman led a team who culled distribution records and references to compile the maps for *Freshwater Fishes of Canada* published in 1973. Bev Scott has said that he knows there were revisions required and they worked with the best information they could get. One piece of information that was incorporated was Atton and Johnson’s listing of new fish records in Saskatchewan. Apparently a cursorial review led someone to take the species listing and ‘occurrence’ as evidence of an extant population. It was mapped in *Freshwater Fishes of Canada* as a pocket around Swift Current Creek and became gospel in the fisheries world. So much so, that when I started working for the province, I was asked to investigate the possibility of setting up a commercial fishery for freshwater drum.

“As to the source record, the Atlas of Saskatchewan Fish by Atton and Merkowsky (1983) mentioned the record as originating in: Atton, F.M. and R.P. Johnson, 1955. First records of eight species

of fishes in Saskatchewan. *Canadian Field Naturalist*. 69:3. 82-84 (July-September issue).

“Here is what the 1955 article says about *Aplodinotus grunniens* Rafinesque, 1819 (freshwater drum): ‘Two dead specimens were found on the bank of Swiftcurrent (*sic*) Creek at Swift Current on June 12, 1953. The northern distribution of this species does not seem to be clear, ... The present record is more surprising because Swiftcurrent Creek is a tributary of the South Saskatchewan River. The northern distribution of this species is thus extended into a drainage only remotely connected with that from which it was previously reported.’

“Perhaps wishful thinking. No other records of freshwater drum have ever been confirmed for Saskatchewan. Those fish on the bank could easily have been bait or lunch trucked in from Bismarck, ND. So what was postulated as a potential record in 1953, and which wouldn’t likely be accredited today (being based on dead fish found on land), ended up having me investigating a potential fishery in 1997!” - Kevin Murphy, Resource Stewardship Branch, Saskatchewan Environment, 3211 Albert Street, Regina SK, S4S 5W6, Phone: (306) 787-2941, E-mail: kmurphy@serm.gov.sk.ca

The editors thank William Walley and Kevin Murphy for information about this unusual fish. If anyone is aware of other possible records for Saskatchewan, Kevin would be interested in hearing about them. This appears to be the fish that got away.