

The statement that follows gives a summary of information and estimated catches returned by local fishery officers:—

Whitebait Fishery: 1939 Season.

Inspector's Centre.	Rivers fished.	Method of Fishing.	Fishing began	Best Month.	Number of Fishermen. (Approximately.)		Total Quantity caught. (Approximately.)
					Whole Time.	Part Time.	
Auckland ..	Waikato	Hand-nets ..	?	?	80	40	Cwt. 322
Auckland ..	Kaituna	Hand-nets ..	?	?	..	..	33
Auckland ..	Tarawera and Rangitaiki	Hand-nets ..	?	?	..	..	65
Napier ..	Tukituki, Ngaruroro, Wairoa	Set-nets ..	1st July ..	October ..	20	35	71
New Plymouth	Mokau, Waitara, Mimi, Tongaporutu, Waiwakaiho, Urenui, Oakura, Stoney, Waiongona	Hand and set nets	1st July ..	October–November	..	100	50
Wanganui ..	Wanganui ..	Hand-nets ..	July ..	October ..	..	20	10
Foxton ..	Manawatu ..	Hand and set nets	August ..	September ..	20	..	9
Wellington ..	Waikanae, Waimiba, Otaki, Waitotahu, Waikawa, Ohau, Hokio, Rangitikei, Hutt, Ruamahunga	Hand and set nets	August ..	August–September	47	..	18
Blenheim ..	Wairau, Rose's overflow, Opawa, Tuamarina	Hand-nets ..	October ..	October ..	12	60	72
Nelson ..	Motueka, Moutere, Takaka, Motupipi	Hand and set nets	{ August .. August ..	{ October .. September ..	9 4	6 4	35 14
Westport ..	Buller, Orawaiti, Mokihinui, Big Totara, Little Totara	Hand-nets ..	September	October ..	12	150	77
Greymouth ..	Teremakau, Grey ..	Hand-nets ..	August ..	October ..	1	200	169
Hokitika ..	Hokitika, Arahura, Mahinapua, Totara, Waimea, Waite, Okuru, Waitaha, Wataroa	Hand and set nets	August ..	October ..	50	83	388
Christchurch ..	Waimakariri, Styx, Ashley, Saltwater Creek, Kaiapoi, Avon	Hand and set nets	August ..	November ..	20	?	241
Temuka ..	Opihi, Orari ..	Set-nets ..	August ..	September ..	..	25	39
Oamaru ..	Kakanui	Hand-nets ..	October ..	November–December	..	6	11
Dunedin ..	Molyneux, Taieri, Kakanui, Waipori, Waikouaiti, Waikawa, Shag, Tokomairiro, Pleasant, Wainakarua	Hand-nets ..	August ..	October–November	16	?	133
Invercargill ..	Mataura, Oreti, Aparima, Waiau, Titiroa, Makarewa	Hand and set nets	August ..	October–November	46	?	180
							1,837

As to the factors responsible for this deficiency, various causes have been suggested which might have operated in some degree. Bad weather and flooded rivers during the period of the whitebait runs operated to some extent as they generally do. If such handicaps on fishing activities did not operate it is certain that the species would be a good deal less abundant than it is, especially in the more remote places where official surveillance over fishing operations is almost entirely lacking. Natural conditions, especially climatic and meteorological variations from the normal, undoubtedly affect whitebait propagation, as they also affect the propagation of salmon, trout, or oysters. In this connection it may be mentioned that the writer anticipated a poor whitebait season following the very abnormal drought in many parts of the Dominion, including the Waikato and Westland areas, in the autumn of 1939 when the spawning of *inanga* takes place from which the whitebait runs of the following spring season are derived. Experienced Maori observers of the habits of *inanga* in the Waikato expressed agreement with this forecast. It may be noted that the Hawke's Bay, Marlborough, and Canterbury districts, where the whitebait catches of 1939 showed an improvement on those of the previous year, are districts which normally experience dry autumns and where, in consequence, the habits and habitats of *inanga* would be less likely to be rendered abnormal by drought conditions. Such speculations as these, however, require further confirmation by more detailed systematic and continuously recorded observations than we have hitherto been able to make. Records of variations in the whitebait runs from year to year are a much needed *desideratum* in this connection, and it is for this reason, as well as for directly conservational objects, that further amendments to the whitebait regulations are needed, and have been recommended.

Regulations have been drafted which, besides introducing measures for the prevention of undue depletion by fishery operations and for preventing individual fishermen from enjoying advantages not shared by others, involve placing the whitebait fishery under a licensing system, a system which has long been advocated with virtual unanimity by all those who take part in the whitebait fishery as a serious occupation. An important object of these proposals is to enable us to get a proper record of the yield of the more important whitebait rivers from year to year in order that production and reproduction may be correlated with variations in natural conditions and with fishing intensities. It is hoped that these regulations may be brought into force for the 1940 season. For whitebait-supplies, as for various other natural assets, the time has passed when the bounty of Nature should be regarded as belonging to nobody and everybody and therefore to be exploited by all and sundry in a something-for-nothing racket.