

After trawling in the Hauraki Gulf was prohibited, the steam-trawler "Minnie Casey" was detected trawling in the prohibited area. Proceedings were taken against the parties concerned, which resulted in conviction and the imposition of fines.

Several other prosecutions have been instituted for illegal fishing, and convictions obtained.

Constables McIntyre and Pratt have been appointed Inspectors of Fisheries at Dunedin and Napier respectively.

The result of the work at the salmon-hatchery at Hakataramea during the year is satisfactory. There has been no sign of disease among the salmon in the hatchery. The best results have been obtained from the quinnat and sockeye salmon introduced from the Pacific Coast of the United States and Canada. These fish have grown remarkably well, and the deaths have been very few. The Atlantic salmon introduced from the United Kingdom are now doing very well, although for size they cannot compare with either quinnat or sockeye of the same age. From the last two importations of Atlantic ova a large number of weak fish were hatched out, and a considerable number of these died during the first six months. During the year 12,000 quinnat salmon twenty months old, 2,000 twenty-six months old, and 10,000 sockeye eleven months old, and 1,500 sixteen months old have been liberated from the ponds into the river.

Three new ponds at Hakataramea have been excavated and the sides and ends concreted. Other ponds have been improved, and willows and other trees have been planted for protecting the land from erosion by the river, and for shelter for the station. Further planting should be carried out, fence extended, a new pond made, and the bottoms of the present ponds concreted during the current year.

I recommend that a shipment of 300,000 quinnat salmon-ova and 1,000,000 whitefish-ova be procured from America during the coming season. The whitefish is a valuable food fish, which has its habitat in lakes.

*Oysters.*—The beds in the Hauraki Gulf and a part of the Northern Oyster Fishery have been inspected by the Chief Inspector of Fisheries, and those in the Northern Fishery which he had not time to examine have been inspected by the Bay of Islands Inspector. The inspections showed that the beds were not fit for picking, and it was therefore decided that they should remain closed during the present season. The beds now open in the North Island are those in the Tauranga Fishery, Ahipara Bay, Herekino, Whangape, Hokiang and Kaipara Harbours, and the leased beds in Manukau Harbour. The beds in the Hauraki Gulf and the Northern Fishery are recovering from the depletion which took place when they were last open. Many owners of land abutting on the oyster-bearing foreshore of the Hauraki Gulf are anxious to lease the beds fronting their property; but, as the law requires all leases to be let by public auction or tender, there is no certainty that they would get the areas they want if the leases were disposed of, as persons other than the property-owners might be the highest bidders. One ground of complaint which the settlers have against the present manner of working the beds is the conduct of some of the licensed pickers, and there is reason to believe that they have good cause to complain. I believe that the preservation and proper working of the beds would be provided for if the law was altered and the beds fronting their property leased to settlers upon such terms as might be deemed reasonable. There would still be sufficient beds in unsettled parts for licensed pickers who are not owners of land fronting the oyster foreshore. If settlers had leases of beds near their homesteads it would be in their own interest to conserve the oysters, and work them in such a way as to be able to take oysters every season. Under the present system the beds are stripped, which necessitates frequent closing to enable them to recuperate, and in many instances it is found that they do not recover, as when the rocks are stripped barnacles and coral take possession, and the oysters do not grow there again. In any case, when the Hauraki Gulf is opened again, I think that there should be an Inspector appointed, who should devote his whole time to the duties of the office, and that he should be supplied with an oil-launch, so that he could get about and exercise proper supervision over the picking. It would be advisable that the provisions of the Act as to registering and licensing oyster-boats should be brought into operation, and that a regulation should be made providing that each boat shall have its number painted on its sail. If this is done the Department will be able to exercise better control over the boats, and the settlers will be in a better position to identify any boats whose crews misbehave themselves.

I still think, as stated in my last year's report, that the law should be altered to provide that oyster revenue shall be paid into the Public Account instead of to the local bodies as at present. All the expense of conserving the beds and administering the law regarding oysters has now to be borne by the Consolidated Fund, while local bodies which are put to no expense receive the revenue. If the beds were leased, oyster and fishing boats licensed for a moderate fee, and the revenue therefrom paid into the Consolidated Fund, sufficient means would be provided for the development of the fisheries and for the conservation of the oysters, which, if the present system continues, will become scarcer as time goes on.

Constable A. McDonnell has been appointed an Inspector at Whangarei in place of Mr. J. Munro, resigned.

Several prosecutions were instituted during the year for illegally taking oysters, and in some cases boats were seized and forfeited. These were returned on payment of amounts in addition to the fines imposed by the Court.

*Weather-reporting.*—This work has been carried on in a satisfactory manner by Captain Edwin. A reporting station has been established at East Cape Lighthouse, and has proved to be of great value.

*Survey of Ships.*—During the year certificates for 244 steamers and seventeen oil-engine vessels have been issued by the Department. A return of such vessels is appended hereto. On the arrival of the s.s. "Balmain" at Auckland in July last, it was represented that she was unseaworthy, and the Department ordered a special survey to be made by Captain Reid, Superintendent of Mercantile