

17s. costs; Miss Ethel Hall, for poaching oysters—convicted, fined £7, and 17s. costs; Mrs. V. Edgar, for poaching oysters—fined £1, and costs 7s.; T. Diamond, for fishing from an unlicensed boat—fined 7s., and 19s. 6d. costs; Tio Diamond, for fishing from an unlicensed boat—convicted, costs £1 6s. 3d.; Tio Diamond, for fishing with an undersized net—convicted, fined £1, and £1 6s. 3d. costs; J. Buchan, A. Meyrick, and A. C. Hansen, for killing fish with explosives—Buchan convicted and sentenced to two months' hard labour, Hansen convicted and fined £5, costs £6 13s., Meyrick convicted and discharged (launch "Sunlight" forfeited, but redeemed on payment of £10.)

FOVEAUX STRAIT OYSTER-BEDS.

From the report supplied by the Inspector of Fisheries at Bluff it would seem that oysters were plentiful on the different beds in the strait, and the quality was excellent throughout the season. The beds which were principally worked were the Ruapuke, Bird Island, and West beds. The intercolonial steamer service has been resumed from Bluff during the year, and this has increased the export of fish and oysters to Melbourne. The quantity of oysters taken from the beds last season was 24,564 sacks, wholesale value £15,341. The quantity sold in the Dominion was 22,926, and the quantity exported to Melbourne was 1,620 sacks.

ROCK-OYSTERS.

The beds picked last season were as follows: At Bay of Islands—Kerikeri, Te Mongonui, Purerua, Moturoa, and Manowaro; in the Hauraki Gulf—Whangaparoa, Mahurangi, Matakana, Ponui, Beeson's Island (Coromandel), and Great Barrier. The total quantity taken for the season was 7,160 sacks. Of this quantity 3,033 came from the Bay of Islands beds, 3,537 from the Hauraki Gulf, and 590 from the Great Barrier. The Government oyster-depot was opened for the sale of oysters on the 1st June, and the season finished on the 21st August. As for some years there has been a difficulty in getting a sufficient number of suitable oyster-pickers in Auckland, Inspector Flinn arranged for eight good men to be sent down from Bay of Islands to supplement the number of pickers required for the Hauraki Gulf. Mr. Edmunds, overseer at Bay of Islands for a number of years, was in charge of the Hauraki Gulf pickers, and the work was carried out most satisfactorily, and the absence of friction amongst the pickers speaks well for his tact and ability in handling men.

The beds as a rule were lightly picked over, and were left in such condition that a good supply of marketable oysters will be available for this season.

The work of extending the beds was continued during the summer months. In Te Kumu Bay, Coromandel coast, 1,640 yards of rock walls was built; at Whangarei, 310 yards; and at Bay of Islands, 1,654 yards: making a total of 3,604 yards, or over two miles, of new beds laid down during the year. Four loads of brood-oysters were taken from Bay of Islands in the Department's oyster ketch "Te Waipounamu" to Whangaroa, to supplement the supply of brood-oysters which were taken there in 1917. The result of the work done at Whangaroa is very satisfactory indeed. The first brood-oysters taken there in 1917 have spawned every year since they were planted, and there is now a good showing of oysters on several points in the neighbourhood of where the beds were laid down. With strict protection these beds in a few years will be fully stocked, and supply a quantity of oysters of the best quality for market.

The rock walls built at Bay of Islands in 1920 and 1921 show a splendid fixing of young oysters, which are growing well. There was a poor fixing of spat on the rock walls built in Te Kumu Bay last year.

During the year the Government bought the freehold of the foreshore of Kawau Island, and by doing so acquired the only privately owned oyster-bed in the Dominion.

This season some of the beds which have been closed on the Coromandel coast for over twenty years, and which were replanted by the Department in 1909, and the Whangarei beds, which have also been closed for the same length of time, will be picked for the first time.

The Department's ketch "Te Waipounamu" has been of great assistance in connection with the oyster picking and cultivation work, and has been kept fully employed most of the year.

With the increasing demand for oysters, and also the great difficulty in properly protecting the beds, I think the time has come when a more comprehensive scheme for the extension and better protection of the beds should be undertaken. I have given this matter careful thought for some time, and I am now of the opinion that the most profitable, economical, and permanent way to protect and extend the beds is by leasing them in sections, and also leasing suitable barren foreshore areas for oyster-cultivation. Besides the advantage of leasing in the other directions mentioned, I think that it might be used as a means for finding remunerative employment and providing homes for a considerable number of intelligent, industrious workers and their families, including returned soldiers of the right class for such work.

ATLANTIC SALMON.

During the last angling season several salmon-smolts were caught by trout anglers near the mouth of the Waiau River in Southland. The fact that these young salmon exist in the river proves that mature sea-run salmon must have spawned in some of the tributaries of that river. I have arranged to have a watch kept on the Upukuroro and some other tributaries this season, so as to find out if mature salmon are spawning there, and, if so, in what numbers, and, if possible, to secure specimens for identification.

In 1908 the Marine Department imported 250,000 eggs from Canada, 1,000,000 in 1909, and another 1,000,000 in 1911. Each shipment arrived in perfect condition, the loss during the voyage out being not more than 1 per cent. They were hatched out at the Department's hatchery at Te Anau Lake, and the young fish were liberated in its tributaries, about 50 per cent. being turned out into the Upukuroro Stream.