

As the Department is concentrating on stocking the Wanganui River, fully half a million of the eggs collected were sent to the Government hatchery on the upper Wanganui, where the eggs hatched out successfully, and the fry were liberated in several tributaries of the main river. The balance of the eggs collected at Te Anau were hatched out and liberated in tributaries of the Waiau and Clutha Rivers.

These salmon have taken so well to the Waiau and its tributaries that care must be taken to maintain and increase the supply in its waters, and for this purpose it might be wise for a few years to restrict the number caught by anglers, and also the quantity of eggs collected for stocking other rivers.

The number of salmon caught by anglers this season was about seven hundred, being quite double the number taken the previous year.

Quinnat Salmon.

The run of these fish last season (1925) was similar to the previous one, both with regard to the number and condition of the fish which came up, but the run for these two seasons was considerably less than for 1922–23.

The work of collecting eggs was continued on similar lines to previous years, with the exception that, on account of not being able to get sufficient skilled assistance, the Dobson River was not worked, operations being confined to the Hakataramea and Ahuriri Rivers.

On account of unsettled weather causing a succession of floods, the work of netting spawning fish was an unusually difficult one, particularly in the Ahuriri, where in the time of a fresh there is a heavy body of water to contend with; and this season, on several occasions, the men, in order to hold their traps, worked in shifts, waist-deep in the water, night and day, and they deserve every praise for the way they held on under such trying conditions.

The total number of eggs collected was 672,000, of which 388,000 were got from the Ahuriri and 284,000 from the Hakataramea. The eggs when "eyed" out were distributed as follows: 500,000 were sent to the Government hatchery at Maori Creek for stocking the Wairau River, 150,000 were supplied to the Tasmanian Government, and the balance were hatched at Hakataramea.

Owing to the smaller number of salmon taken in the traps this season the quantity of fish cured for sale at Hakataramea only amounted to 292 lb. There was a keen demand for the product, and owing to the limited supply available numerous applications had to be refused.

Foveaux Strait Oyster-beds.

The quantity of oysters landed at Bluff from these beds for the season under review was 26,039 sacks; wholesale value, £17,576. This shows an increase of 2,243 sacks in quantity and £2,703 in value on the previous year's catch. This year 23,870 sacks were disposed of in the Dominion, and 1,987 sacks and 89 cases of opened and frozen oysters were exported to Australia. Scientific investigations in connection with the occurrence and condition of the oysters are now being made by Mr. Maxwell W. Young, of the Portobello Station, under the supervision of Mr. Hefford. This is important work, as the scientific control of the working of these valuable beds is necessary for their permanent conservation. The investigations up to the present have been made in the open oyster season, and by going out in one of the oyster-dredging vessels. These vessels naturally work only the beds which give the best returns. To carry out the investigations to a successful conclusion it is necessary that some work should be done in the close season, when most of the oysters are spawning, and at the same time to test areas which are not worked by the commercial dredgers.

Toheroa Beds.

The beds on the North Kaipara beach are well stocked with toheroa of all ages, and the lessees of Nos. 1 and 2 areas have had a successful season at their cannery—the pack for the season consisting of 980 cases.

The lessees of the beds on the Ninety-mile Beach also report a successful season. Toheroas were plentiful and in splendid condition, and the quantity canned shows a large increase on the previous season's operations.

An inspection was made of the Rangatira Beach (South Kaipara), and it was found that toheroas exist along a stretch of about twenty-seven miles, but the beds are scattered and not nearly so well stocked as those on the North Kaipara and Ninety-mile Beach.

Rock-oysters.

During the past season the Department took 8,297 sacks of oysters, which yielded a return of £10,205.

Portobello Marine Fisheries Investigation Station.

During the past year the position and usefulness of the Portobello Fish-hatchery has been under the joint consideration of the Department and the Board which immediately controls it. The position was that although in the past few years the Department has been almost entirely financing the station, it has had no voice in the expenditure or policy of the work.

By mutual agreement Mr. Hefford has joined the Board. The Department has increased its financial assistance to enable the station to function to more definite purpose. At the commencement of each year a programme of work will be laid down which may encompass any particular investigation that the Department may require to be undertaken. The Department has taken Mr. M. Young, the station biologist, on to its staff, and he is now available for any work either at the station or elsewhere.

Attached hereto is the annual report of the Chairman of the Board (Hon. G. M. Thomson, M.L.C.).