

An investigation of the Indian spotted deer (*Cervis axis*) has been authorized by the Department, and this will be carried out by Messrs. T. Ormiston and James Holmes, of Te Awamutu, during the 1929 stalking season, if time permits.

*Feathered Game.*—The usual season for feathered game was opened for two months—from the 1st May to the 30th June, 1928. The duck-shooting was above the average bag in favoured places only, most sportsmen obtaining eight to fourteen ducks the first day. The only large bag reported was the limit, shot on one of the Orini lagoons, where the ducks are hand-fed in a very isolated spot. Fair shooting of both ducks and swans was reported from Tarawera Swamp and the lagoons about Mount Edgecumbe, Ruatoki, Waimana, and parts of Matata Swamp. In Taupo County good bags were obtained at the Tokaanu end of Lake Taupo, where Chief Ranger Yerex, of the Department of Internal Affairs, and Mr. Lowry, of Hawke's Bay, got near the limit bag on the opening day. A fair number of ducks were also shot on Loch Invar and the Runanga lagoons, and Lakes Rerewhakaaitu, Rotomahana, Rotoma, and Rotoehu. In the Galatea district several sportsmen had good shooting, also at Reporoa Valley, Waikato River, and Atiamuri.

In the Wairoa County portion of the district the wild ducks were extremely plentiful, but owing to there being so much water about the lagoons not a great number were shot. Swans were also numerous. Pheasants provided good shooting all over the country, though individual bags were not large. Californian and Australian quail were very scarce, and the Virginian quail have been practically shot out in the Wairoa area.

Pheasant and quail shooting was above the average over the Rotorua, Whakatane, and Taupo Counties, one party taking the limit of ten cock pheasants for three successive days in the vicinity of Opepe, where the shooter had the luck to come across the progeny of a fairly large liberation made there some three seasons before. Over one hundred pheasants were shot off this area during the first month, most of the birds going to Hawke's Bay. The big patches of maize grown all over the Rotorua and Whakatane Counties held a lot of pheasants, and these were nearly all obtained during the opening week. Quail were plentiful along the Tarawera, Rangitaiki, and Waikato River banks, but are not quite so numerous as they were five years ago; the swamp-quail are exceedingly scarce in many places where they formerly flourished.

There is every indication that either the limit of twenty ducks a day will have to be reduced in future years or the duration of the season curtailed to six weeks, to give the game a better chance of surviving against the ever-increasing number of sportsmen, and the scores of vermin, such as rats, hawks, stoats, weasels, and wild cats.

Protection should be removed from stoats and weasels and a bonus paid for their destruction. There are more efficient methods of dealing with the rabbit nuisance wherever it exists than relying on the very doubtful assistance of either the stoat or weasel pests, which are slowly doing as much harm to our decreasing native and game birds as all the other natural enemies put together.

*Trout-fishing.*—The last trout-fishing season was a very successful one towards its close, large creels of well-conditioned trout up to 8 lb. weight being taken at or near the mouths of all the local streams, and in many of the lakes and larger rivers, during the month of May. Overseas fishermen angling and trolling in several lakes secured large numbers of fine fish. The trolling in Rotorua Lake is not up to the average of the other lakes, the extensive netting operations carried out for so many years being the primary cause. The liberations of the past two years have not had time to mature into trout of the legal catchable size of 10 in. With the increasing supply of trout-food visible, and more intensive restocking of trout-fry or yearlings over another three or four years, Rotorua Lake can be brought back to something like the fishing-conditions prevailing about twenty years ago. Fair average baskets of trout were also caught in Lakes Tarawera, Okataina, Okareka, Rotoiti, Rotoehu, and Rotoma.

The Waikato River between Huka Falls and the district boundary, above the head of Arapuni Lake dam, also yielded up good fighting-fish, and the same conditions apply to the Whirinaki, Rangitaiki, and upper Whakatane Rivers. Fishing in the lower Tarawera and Waimana Rivers was not so good as last season. More stocking is needed in these places, as there are more natural enemies of the young fry present than is the case in the lakes. Many individual catches have been recorded in the *Fishing Gazette* by its correspondent, Mr. A. Carruthers, himself a keen fisherman. A new angler's fishing-camp has been established near Murupara by Mr. W. Bird on a favoured fishing reach, and about a mile of the worst of the scrub and gorse has been cut back to allow the anglers access to this ideal fly-fishing water.

The popularity of Lakes Rotoiti and Okataina as fishing resorts is growing each season, a large number of fishing-shacks being erected about the shores of Rotoiti, while a substantial fishing-lodge has been erected at Okataina, where also launches and boats are available. Authentic catches of up to thirty trout for two rods were often taken in a day. Messrs. Booth and Thatcher, of Sydney, made an average weight of 5 lb. with Rotoiti trout. The Tarawera Lake fish gave a slightly better average, one catch of Messrs. Baker and Pooley going just over 6 lb. One of the best trout was recently caught in Lake Okataina by Lord Liverpool, which scaled 10 lb., and another of the same weight was caught off Ngongotaha Stream, Lake Rotorua, by Mr. Cunningham.

*Opossum Season.*—The trapping season for taking opossums in the Rotorua Acclimatization District was again opened for a month from the 1st to the 31st July, just fifty-seven licenses and one landholder's permit being issued to trap opossums. The total number of skins on which royalty was paid reached 3,045. The highest catch by a party was made by Messrs. Armstrong Brothers, of Arapuni, who marketed 234 skins, but the average catch per man was only about fifty-odd skins. This low average in a limited district where previous catches averaged 200 per license-holder points to the fact that the opossums are already heavily depleted, and unless a close season is enforced they will reach the point of extermination. As the opossum is the most valuable wild fur-bearing animal