

in the Dominion, it will be necessary, in the interests of preservation of this asset, to have a close season in 1929. Those societies that were far-sighted enough to introduce opossums into their respective districts in the earlier years have reaped and are reaping rich profits from the fur industry. Last season the total of opossum-skins marketed amounted to 139,300, while in 1926 it reached 155,000 skins. Now it is recognized that the opossum thrives best in rough bush country, where it does little or no harm to indigenous timber-bearing trees, and costs nothing for upkeep and increase, other acclimatization societies are endeavouring to seek ways and means of stocking up suitable areas with a good class of animal, as a future source of revenue. This is not to be wondered at when the best class of any skins brought from 14s. to 22s. in the open market this past season.

Liberation of Pheasants.—During the year, principally owing to complaints that too much of the ranger's time was taken up in rearing pheasants, less work was done in this direction than in previous years. The preparations for a season's rearing take considerable time for nearly a year ahead. The total number of pheasants liberated throughout the district was 119; of these, eighty-three were liberated in the Whakatane, Rotorua, and Taupo Counties, and thirty-six in the Wairoa County. Several breeding-pens of birds were furnished, or added by fresh blood, to some breeders in the district, and all birds reared by them will be purchased for future liberation within the local areas. An order for some two hundred birds was given to a well-known Auckland breeder, who was seeking orders from various societies. These should be available for liberation at the end of the 1929 game-shooting season.

Mallard Ducks.—Seventeen mallard ducks were liberated in suitable places in the district, and those previously liberated in the Wairoa County, and Lakes Okareka, Okataina, Lock Invar, and Rere whakaitu, have been seen with broods of ducklings. As the strain liberated was from some bred in the district for about twenty years, it was deemed advisable to procure a fresh strain of new blood, and imported birds from England have now been procured for future rearing operations. This should result in an improvement in the class of wild stock in two or three years.

Trout-fry Liberation.—A considerable increase in the number of trout-fry liberated in the district was made in 1928. Since the netting of the local lakes was discontinued it was evident that, with the ever-increasing number of anglers, heavy restocking work was required. This has been the Department's endeavour, and the returns furnished show that the following liberations were made throughout the district: Rainbow trout-ova — Wairoa County, 400,000. Rainbow trout-fry — Whakatane County, 77,500; Waikato River, 15,000; Taupo County, 5,000; Matata Area, 2,500; Rotorua Lake, 250,000; Rotoiti Lake, 300,000; Tarawera Lake, 200,000; Okataina Lake, 125,000; Rotokakahi Lake, 100,000; Okareka Lake, 75,000; Rotoma Lake, 75,000; Rotoehu Lake, 75,000; Ngahewa Lake, 10,000; Tikitapu Lake, 10,000: total, 1,720,000.

Research Work.—A considerable number of samples of trout-scales were taken and preserved for future reference in regard to the Rotorua trout-fisheries, and statistics were taken of the temperature of the various waters, together with a record of the visible food-supply. No tagged or marked trout were recovered during the season.

General.—The thanks of the Department are due to those officers of the Police Force who assisted the rangers in connection with cases of poaching, and to those gentlemen in the Wairoa County, Messrs. Richards and Mills, who assisted to rear and liberate trout-fry, also to those keen members of the Wairoa Rod and Gun Club who were responsible for the liberation of both pheasants and trout-fry with their cars. The ranger's motor-vehicles proved most efficient for all classes of acclimatization work which had to be carried out, and the motor-cycle proved its usefulness in enabling a wide area to be ranged in very quick time.

Extension of District.—One of the most interesting matters during the year was the fact that the Opotiki Acclimatization Society, whose district joins the Rotorua district on the eastern boundary, asked to be taken into the Rotorua Acclimatization District. The Government being agreeable, the whole of the Opotiki County will be incorporated within the boundaries of the Rotorua Acclimatization District, and administered in future by this Department. The Opotiki sportsmen will now reap the benefit of sharing in better trout-fishing, game-liberation, ranging, and restocking of rivers at the same license fees, owing to the stronger financial resources and expert knowledge and organization of this Department. A start will be made at once to bring the Opotiki area up to the standard of Rotorua district.

ROTORUA BATH BUILDINGS.—BALNEOLOGIST'S REPORT.

The Government Balneologist reports as follows: "I have the honour to submit my report on the Rotorua baths for the year ended 31st March, 1929.

"The financial returns, as you will note, show a satisfactory increase in all the departments under my control. This is gratifying to myself, because it indicates an increasing appreciation of our service by visitors to this Spa.

"During the past season a great number of overseas patients availed themselves of the mineral-water baths and treatments, and derived considerable benefit from the cure. The Press Conference, which was held in Rotorua in February last, was a particularly important function, inasmuch that the natural assets of our baths and the work of medical hydrology gained a widespread publicity throughout the Dominion.

"*The Sanatorium.*—As indicated by the financial returns, the institution has been particularly busy throughout the year, and our list of patients waiting for admission has stressed the fact of restricted accommodation and the urgent need for a larger and more up-to-date building. During the year approximately 15,000 special treatments (exclusive of baths) were given to Sanatorium patients; and the majority of these received considerable benefit.