

The information obtained as to the fishing and its productivity from the principal centres is summarized below :—

Whitebait Fishery.

Inspector's Centre.	Rivers fished.	Method of Fishing.	Fishing began	Best Month.	Number of Fishermen. (Approximately.)		Total Quantity caught. (Approximate.)
					Whole Time.	Part Time.	
Auckland ..	Waikato	Hand-nets ..	July ..	September ..	70	50	Cwt. 1,029
Auckland ..	Kaituna	Hand-nets ..	July ..	September ..	10	12	45
Auckland ..	Tarawera and Rangitai	Hand-nets ..	Late July	August – September	30	30	39
Napier ..	Tukituki and Ngaruroro	Set-nets ..	July ..	October ..	25	50	31
New Plymouth	Mimi, Urenui, Waitara, Waiwakaiho, &c.	Hand and set nets	July ..	August ..	..	100	13
Foxton ..	Manawatu ..	Set-nets ..	July ..	October ..	..	20	17
Blenheim ..	Wairau, Opawa, Tuamarina, and Rose's Overflow	Hand-nets ..	September	November ..	5	50	25
Karamea ..	Karamea and Little Wanganui	Hand-nets ..	August ..	September ..	..	40	23
Westport ..	Buller, Totara, and Ngakawa	Hand-nets ..	August ..	..	..	50	125
Greymouth ..	Teremakau, Grey, and New Rivers	Set and hand nets	August ..	November ..	20	100	121
Hokitika ..	Hokitika, Mahinapua Creek, Waimea, Totara, and Waitaha	Set and hand nets	August ..	October ..	61	40	243
Matainui ..	Styx, Ashley, Waimakariri, and Avon	Set and hand nets	September	November ..	53	24	93
Christchurch ..	Mataura, New River, Waikini, Oreti, Molyneux, Taieri, and Waikouaiti	Hand-nets ..	September	October ..	..	..	44
Dunedin ..	Mataura, Oreti, Aparima, and Makarewa	Hand and set nets	September	..	..	150	40
Invercargill ..							1,888

Compared with the previous year, all the chief sources of commercial whitebait-supplies show a considerable decline, except the Waikato (Auckland), from which the estimated yield was 1,029 cwt., as against 804 cwt. for the 1935 season. It should be noted, however, that the Waikato whitebait do not consist entirely of young *inanga* (*Galaxias attenuatus*), but contain an admixture of young smelts or “silveries” (*Retropinna retropinna*); and this season the proportion of smelts was unusually high, amounting, according to a competent judge on the spot, to more than 60 per cent. of the total. Young smelts are also taken with whitebait in the southern rivers, but it is doubtful whether the proportion caught and marketed ever reaches as much as 6 per cent. They are perfectly palatable and nutritious, and young fish belonging to the same family constitute a large part of the mixture of species that is covered by the commercial name of “whitebait” in other parts of the world. However, the connoisseur of New Zealand whitebait considers that their presence among the true *Galaxias* species depreciates its high gastronomic quality. The opinion has been expressed by a resident observer of whitebait conditions on the Waikato that the small run of *Galaxias* whitebait in the spring of 1936 was a consequence of the abnormal flood during February, which left a heavy deposit of silt on the herbage of the river-banks at the time when the spawn would be lying there. The report from the local Inspector of Fisheries for the Napier district describes the fishing in the Ngaruroro and Tukituki Rivers as fair, the total yield being estimated at 31 cwt., as against 32 cwt. for the previous season. In most other places, and particularly on the West Coast of the South Island, the prevalence of wet weather and continual floods were generally regarded as responsible for the greatly reduced catches; but there seems little doubt that in several rivers the quantities of fish running were well below the average. No estimate was obtained from Matainui as to the catches of whitebait in southern Westland this season. It is known, however, that the fishery in that remote and comparatively virgin region was disappointing. Two enterprises may be noted in connection with the whitebait fishery of this territory, one being the location, not for the first time, however, of a mobile cannery plant at Parenga; the other the transport of whitebait from Big Bay by aeroplane to Invercargill. This will doubtless be continued in subsequent seasons so long as the virgin resources are maintained in this region, which had been unexploited up to this time and which is apparently the only part of New Zealand where the whitebait stocks have not been deteriorated by the effects of human settlement and human interference with the primeval natural conditions. Poor as was the 1936 total catch of whitebait compared with those of earlier years, it nevertheless represented a total value of nearly £18,000 to the fishermen, without regarding the numerous “feeds” of this delicacy secured by amateur whitebaiters.