

outside the harbour are the best at all times of the year, but the same fish enter the harbour and are in good condition up the creeks in Spring. Is not aware whether offal is thrown into the sea from the canneries, but dog-fish are much more abundant than formerly. The chief enemies of the mullet are dog-fish, kahawai, and shags. The shags destroy a great number of fish, especially small ones. Other fish caught in the harbour are flounders, schnapper, kahawai, and eels, and sometimes other sea-fish, such as trevalli, gurnard, &c. The fishing is better and more varied near the Heads, and up those branches where there are no large rivers. All fish except the schnapper are caught with the nets, and only the one kind is used for all fish—viz., the mullet-nets. These are set across the creeks, and on the flats along the shores which are dry at low water. Most of the flounders are thus caught; they are entangled, but not struck by the mesh. As the tide recedes they are caught in the fold, and shaken out when the bank is dry. There is no scarcity of flounders. Considers that it would be best to have a close season for two months and a half of the year—from the 15th December to the 1st March—and it should apply to the whole harbour, as otherwise the fishermen would migrate on to other men's ground, and destroy fish that cannot be used.

*Mate*, s.s. "Osprey": Has been a fisherman for twelve years in Kaipara Harbour. Considers there are fewer mullet than formerly, and attributes the falling-off to the great increase in the number of shags. They are in thousands, and feed on the small fish. The Maoris used to keep the shags in check by eating them, and destroyed the eggs and young birds. He thinks a reward should be offered for the destruction of shags. Is of opinion that mullet go out to sea to spawn, as there is no suitable ground inside, for where there is not mud there is too strong a current sweeping the bottom. Young fry the size of whitebait can be seen near the Heads, entering with the flood-tide in solid shoals, about Christmas time or even earlier (October). Never caught spent fish in the harbour. When the roe is ripe the fish go outside to spawn. Thinks a close season is not required, as the fishermen know they can make nothing by the fish when not in good condition, and during the hot weather.

*Moros*, Greek fisherman at Kaihu: Exhibited a lot of mullet in fine condition, with ovaries 4 in. long, but not developed; no ova being found, being in a state in which they may remain dormant until favourable circumstances of temperature and situation for breeding are encountered. One male fish had testes like pack-thread, being quite undeveloped. These fish were caught down the harbour near the mouth of the Otamatea branch. Mullet do not come up to Wairoa in the winter time, or in the freshes, as the fresh muddy water drives them back. He (*Moros*) fishes all the year. There are always some good fish. Quite lately his brother took a thousand dozen of similar fish to those exhibited on Onapaua, but the canneries would not buy, and they were thrown away. The roe is big in January. After that see no spent fish, or fish in roe. They seem to go away at once after spawning. In summer, when the river is salt, schools of fish are seen leaping on the bank opposite Kaihu, with flood-tide. This is in the beginning of the year.

*Mr. Rodgers*, Innkeeper: Has been at Kaihu for three years. Has hardly ever seen fish leaping in numbers opposite his place, except at one time, when the "Osprey" was laid up. He thinks the paddle will drive away the fish, especially by stirring up the mud. Never any fish caught as far up as Kaihu when there is a fresh in the river.

*Mr. Harding*, Hori-hori: Has been fifteen years resident. He fishes for mullet by splashing along the bank, so that they jump into the boat in the evening when the salt water reaches up the river with flood-tide. This (October and November) is the best time for this sport. The most ever caught in one evening was forty. Out on the coast is the best place for large fish, and they are very superior in the quality of flesh. There are no small ones caught in the sea; all large, and about one size. They are caught with nets that are shot round the school and drawn on the beach. Has seen Maoris make morning hauls in this way; they dry the fish. When he first came to settle in Kaipara, and for several years afterwards, he used to see the river alive with mullet, passing his place with the flood-tide, when there was no fresh in the river above. They rushed in in great schools, rushing and darting with great activity; in the month of January. Never see such abundance now, and attributes the decrease to the steamer having frightened the fish entering the harbour channels.

*Captain Smith*, Harbourmaster: Adheres to his former written opinions that the canneries should be closed for three months, from the 1st December to the 1st March, and that no other close season is required. Thinks the reason why only large fish are got on the sea-beach is the large size of mesh used.

*Mr. Monk*: Has made inquiries of the Maoris, especially the elder ones, within the last few days, and reports that they have seen ova on the sides of the mud-banks, but they knew not how deposited, or if they were hatched out. The Natives used largely (and of late years to a less extent) to fish on the outside coast in the winter time, not in summer. The fish come close in shore in great schools during easterly winds. They are closely crowded together, with their noses protruding from the surface of the water, while they feed on a brown scum that drives off shore. The Natives, armed with a long net, stand 6 ft. apart, and, at the proper time, dart into the water and surround the fish on the shelving beach, enclosing them in the net. In this manner enormous quantities are taken. They are all of one size, large, and with firm flesh, being much superior to any taken within the harbour. In early winter (April and May) the fish are often greatly distended with fully-developed roe. The beach fishing is so important that it is subdivided and marked off by stakes, a section being allotted to each hapu or section of the tribe. The fish come in-shore, sometimes on one section, sometimes on another, and when caught become the property of the hapu owning that particular section of the beach. This is a very old custom, and is still observed. When Mr. Monk told them that Government were going to protect the kanae from being destroyed or lost they were greatly amused, and asked how it was that when there were many more Maoris than there now are in Kaipara, and who fished for and lived on the kanae all the year round, the fish did not lessen in numbers. They think that no close season is required.