

The quantity varies with the different years, the difference depending on the prevailing temperature. The fish are in full roe from the beginning of December to the 1st February. Spawn during the same period. Have never seen spawn. Think they deposit it at the head of the creeks in shallow water. They run up the creeks that are dry at low water and retire with the ebb in mobs. On one occasion I caught some of these. They were soft flabby fish, nothing in them, and not fit for use. This was after Christmas. Think they pay three or four visits to the spawning-ground before they are thoroughly spent. See very young fish in the creeks going up and down with the tide in thousands about the end of February. Only get one size and age when catching for the canneries, but formerly they were much larger compared with such as are at present obtained. Never get big fish now. From the Natives we used to get very large and fine fish from the outside coast. At present they are about 1½ lb., and the large fish would be about 3 lb. At present we employ two boats, which are out day about. The take is from 60 to 100 dozen per day. This is what we like to get, and can manage best in the curing-works. Our season begins in March. The fish then are plentiful and come in schools, or gather together, having had a period of rest. Formerly they gathered up the rivers, but now they gather only on the banks and in the channels. Since 1887, when the Otamatea has been closed for three months of each year, the fish have resumed gathering in the river before March, when the fishing season commences. The accumulation is caused by their first coming in to spawn in summer, and not leaving again. In March they are all right again, and fat, unless the hot weather continues very late, when the fish are later in recovering. Do not think it is necessary for mullet to go out to sea after spawning to recover their condition, but probably some may do so. School-fish, or "clean-guts," which have just come in from the sea, are caught in the winter with other fish on the banks. They can easily be distinguished. I never saw a clean-gut fish in roe. The first fall in condition is after spawning—*i.e.*, they lose their fat. They weigh heaviest when in mature roe, more than when in the best condition, in June and July. We throw away the roes and roe fat with the offal. The offal is only sometimes thrown into the harbour, but not as a rule. It is at once recovered by kahawai and dog-fish. As the close season up to now has been beneficial, as already explained, I am in favour of its being continued. It should be from the 1st December to the 1st March on the average. It would be better if the condition of the fish could be observed and the season varied from year to year, as there is often, as in last year, quite a month's difference in the time of the fish developing roe. A month's time of notice for the commencement of the season could always be obtained by inspection of the fish. A close period of three months is quite sufficient. The close season should apply to the whole harbour. The fact is, the fish are caught at night, and no one can say where they are caught—that is, if within or without the closed boundary. Last February some canneries commenced working a month before the opening of the season. The best way would be to make the closing apply to the canning-factories for three months. The fish would then be sufficiently protected, and the local fishing by settlers would not be interfered with—all taken by them would not matter. The close season should only apply to Kaipara and to the Bay of Islands, as only there are there any factories; but for the general benefit it would be better if all fishing in tidal creeks and channels were prosecuted during a short close season suitable to the spawning-time in each locality. Fish are very seldom seen up the creeks in winter, or before the warm weather comes. They avoid the cold water of freshets. It takes two months for the fishermen to get the spell work done any year, as they are only idle one month. During this they could go fishing for other fish, but could not well catch flat-fish without taking some mullet. During the idle time they can always find something to do. They like a rest, and take a holiday in town. They get in the winter supply of firewood, mend their nets, and tan them, and overhaul their boats. Have never heard our fishermen complain of any hardship in this respect. Our other employés at the factory have no time idle, as we do beef- and fruit-canning in January and February. On the 1st December, when the fishing season closes, we clean up and overhaul all the fishing establishment. This generally takes three weeks, so that we get the works all renewed and clean by Christmas for the beef- and fruit-preserving. The beef-tinning is in full swing by the second week in January, and about the 1st February we commence the fruit-preserving, such as pears, peaches, and plums. We employ the same hands as for the fish-canning, with a few exceptions. The fruit-canning is finished and we are ready for the fish-canning by the 1st March, but do not always begin, as the weather is sometimes still too warm. In such a case we continue to work with fruit as long as possible.

*James Otamatea Masefield*: Was born on the river. Has always been fishing and working with mullet. Have seen the mullet rooting in the mud between salt and fresh water, when it would be half-dry at low water. Thought they were spawning, but never actually saw spawn. Such places would not be quite dry at dead low water. I saw this about Christmas time. Much fewer fish than formerly. This applies to the whole harbour. It is not due to the shifting about. The following is a note of the fish delivery for one boat at Messrs. Masefield's factory at Batley:—

	1891.	1893.	1894.	1895.
March .. ..	229 dozen.	...	552 dozen.	455 dozen.
April ... ..	319 "	715 dozen.	617 "	327 "
May ... ..	288 "	572 "	641 "	387 "
June ... ..	413 "	827 "	555 "	316 "
July ... ..	862 "	1,286 "	491 "	394 "
August ... ..			674 "	218 "
September ... ..	476 "	1,148 "	398 "	270 "
October ... ..	587 "	1,293 "	1,103 "	700 "
November ... ..	...	1,000 "	917 "	...

3,174 dozen. 6,841 dozen. 5,948 dozen. 3,067 dozen.

Closed down during season of 1892,