

scarcities of fish in season. We all know the enormous influence which a warm or cold year has on the production of insect and vegetable life. Precisely the same thing occurs in the ocean, and the minute forms of life on which fish feed are very sensitive to the warmth or cold of any particular season. When there is a failure of these forms of life the fish are obliged to scatter in search of food, and are not therefore collected together to be so easily caught by the net fishermen." These facts apply to all our fishes in New Zealand, so that we need not fear that in a few years there will not be any fish, or that any particular kind of fish will be destroyed by over-catching at spawning or any other time. Many of the readers of this will remember the times when they have had a nice bloater with a hard or soft roe, as their taste dictated, and will not be frightened by the silly remarks some of your correspondents have stated as regards fish at spawning-time. I could state a great many more facts from my own knowledge and from that of scientists, but I think these statements will show that no close season is needed for sea-fish. Certain people may like it for selfish purposes, but not for the good of the many.—I am, &c.,  
C. BISHOP, Fishmonger.

[Extract from the *New Zealand Herald*, 3rd February, 1896.]

KILLING THE GOOSE THAT LAYS THE GOLDEN EGG.

To the Editor.

SIR,—Formerly there was a nominal close season for mullet, but the law was framed in such a way that it could be, and was evaded every year. A close season was established last year, but for some reasons has been altered, and a great scientist investigated the matter, with the result that things are worse than before. Certain fishermen have started fishing and canning a fortnight ago, although it is only the middle of the spawning season, and we maintain, with all due deference to scientific or any other opinion, that mullet is unfit for canning purposes during that time; and we further maintain that the mullet industry will die a natural death if a close season is not properly and strictly enforced. We want to look for the future, and do not want to see the industry we have started killed by a lot of short-sighted people.—We are, &c.,  
MASEFIELD BROTHERS.

[Extract from the *New Zealand Herald*, 12th February, 1896.]

KILLING THE GOOSE THAT LAYS THE GOLDEN EGG.

To the Editor.

SIR,—Under the above heading a letter appeared in your issue of the 3rd February signed "Masefield Brothers," in which they seek to establish that in the interests of the mullet-canning industry there should be an extended close season during which that fish would be prohibited from being caught. They contend that for some additional months mullet are unfit for canning purposes, and that the industry will die a natural death if a prolonged close season is not properly and strictly enforced. Now, Sir, owing to the representations made by Messrs. Masefield Brothers, the Government last session extended the close season for catching mullet from the 1st December to the 31st March; but upon Mr. Ewing and others interested in that business representing to the Ministers and members of Parliament that a great injury was being done both to the industry and the firms engaged in same, the newly-imposed and altogether unjust restriction was cancelled, and the close season remained as before. Finding that those interested in the industry differed so materially in their opinions as to the time the close season should exist, the Government wisely decided to obtain expert information upon the question, and appointed Sir James Hector to deal exhaustively with the matter. That gentleman visited the Kaipara, and spent considerable time on the Otamatea River, especially obtaining during his stay mullet caught both in that river and the Kaipara Harbour. The results of the Government expert's scientific investigation are reported to be adverse to a general close season, an opinion which is indorsed by all practical fishermen at Kaipara. Anticipating that Sir James Hector's report would be unfavourable to their views, Messrs. Masefield Brothers say in their letter that what they maintain is right, "with all due deference to scientific or any other opinion." Scientific investigation, made by a gentleman totally unbiassed and enjoying a high reputation; the experience and knowledge of others engaged in the mullet-preserving industry; of the fishermen employed, are of no value when opposed to the opinion of Masefield Brothers. Why this firm contend upon this question as they do may be easily explained by those who are aware of the facts. It may suit Messrs. Masefield Brothers splendidly to discontinue the mullet-canning industry from the 1st December to the 31st March, so that they can utilise the same plant to carry out their fruit-canning; but how about firms who have not immense orchards of fruit to preserve? They must, forsooth, close down for months until the fruit season is over. Sir, this is February—about the middle of the period Messrs. Masefield Brothers claim mullet are not fit for canning—and we can give you our personal experiences of mullet caught during the last two weeks. We say unhesitatingly the fish are in splendid condition—especially suitable for canning; and we are glad to be able to state are as plentiful as at any time in our long experience in these waters. Messrs. Masefield Brothers and the general public may rest assured that our company for one will not assist in any way to "kill the goose that lays the golden egg" either by canning ill conditioned mullet or in any other respect; but we most strongly object to having to close down for months to serve the private interests of an opposing firm.—We are, &c.,  
Otamatea, Kaipara, 5th February, 1896.

THE ZEALANDIA CANNING COMPANY.

[Extract from the *New Zealand Herald*, 15th February, 1896.]

CLOSE SEASON FOR MULLET.

To the Editor.

SIR,—I shall be obliged if you will grant me space in your columns to reply to the letters signed "Masefield Brothers," which have appeared on above subject.

A close season was not established last year. An Order in Council was issued making certain alterations in time and area affected by the regulations; but, as these alterations were condemned by all canners and fishermen in the Kaipara with the exception of one firm, that Order in Council was cancelled before the date on which the new regulations were to come into operation, and the regulations which have been in force for some years remain as before. Now, as the regulations at present are exactly identical with those which have been in force for some years, how can things be worse than before? The Government, very rightly, deciding that legislation without knowledge as to the exact condition of the fish and their habits might prove infinitely worse than no legislation at all, appointed Sir James Hector to investigate and report. That gentleman, until he began his investigation, was, I believe, an absolute stranger to all the canners, and had no bias or personal interests in the matter. His duty was simply to ascertain facts and report same. He has devoted considerable time and taken much trouble to get and demonstrate the facts of the case before giving his opinion, and in this he differs from the writer of the letters under reply, who seems to consider his *ipse dixit* sufficient to end argument. Masefield Brothers writes, "Mullet are plentiful in summer months, when fish come into the rivers to spawn." If he is so certain that mullet spawn in the rivers and creeks, and as the three rivers Otamatea, Oruawhoro, Arapaua and their tributaries are closed under existing regulations, what more does he want? But the fact is, he is quite aware that Sir James Hector has shown that it is almost a certainty that mullet do not spawn in the rivers and creeks. Sir James had fish caught in January (which Masefield Brothers state is the middle of the spawning season) in the rivers and creeks at Bay of Islands, Hokianga, and Kaipara. Those caught in Kaipara were cleaned and examined by Sir James Hector, Captain Smith (Harbourmaster), Captain Ross (master s.s. "Wairoa"), myself, and a few others. The result of the examination was, not one spent fish was found. Not one fish with fully developed roe was found. A few fish with roe from quarter- to half-developed were taken, but the great majority were fish which could not have shed spawn this year, and the balance were mostly fish which could not have spawned during present close season. On the other hand, every fish was fat, most of them very fat; every fish was sound and firm-fleshed throughout, and in every way splendid fish, in perfect condition for eating and canning—in every way better fish than I anticipate getting in April. However, fish taken at the Heads, or outside the Heads of the harbours, were nearly all full-roed fish, some of the roes weighing fully 12 oz. Surely, with all due deference to Masefield Brothers, this evidence entirely disposes of the opinion, unsupported by any evidence, of any individual or firm. Before leaving