

FRESH-WATER EELS

Recent observations have tended to show that there is now abundant evidence to place the fresh-water eels in the position of "trout enemy No. 1" in many of our rivers. Largely on this account there has been a revival and increase of interest in the subject of eel-fishing. This is a welcome sign, for, apart from their position among the undesirables in a trout stream, the eels undoubtedly represent our most valuable source of food-supply in the fresh waters of this Dominion. With our abundant supply of other customary foodstuffs we have hitherto allowed prejudice and indifference to stand in the way of making general use of this potentially rich fishery. In actual nutritional value the annual harvest of eels would be worth a good deal more than our whitebait; and whitebait-supplies in an average year have a market value of over £20,000. In certain places limited supplies of eels have been sold in the fish-shops this year, both fresh and smoked, and there has also been a tentative beginning of an export trade, but the labour and transport difficulties peculiar to wartime conditions have impeded progress. The shortage of food in the world of to-day—and to-morrow—raises the obvious question as to whether, if we do not need or want the eels for ourselves, we cannot obtain supplies for sending to countries where such food is greatly needed and where even in pre-war times when generous supplies of other foods were obtainable eels were regarded not only as good food, but as delicacies.

FRESH-WATER RESEARCH

In the absence of both biologists, there has been no field-work during the year. Records and reports from anglers in connection with Mr. K. R. Allen's intensive study of the trout stock of the Horokiwi have continued to come in, and are being dealt with by the laboratory assistant, Miss Josephine Russell. A preliminary report on this work prepared by Mr. Allen two years ago, but not accepted for printing on account of the paper shortage, is being submitted as an Appendix to this report. Seeing that, by regulations made under the Fisheries Amendment Act, 1936, 10 per cent. (reduced since the war to 5 per cent.) of the revenue obtained by acclimatization societies from fishing-license fees is paid into the Consolidated Fund for the financing of fresh-water-fishery research, and seeing that anglers' representatives on the council of at least one acclimatization society have quite justifiably ventilated the question as to what they are getting for their money, it is hoped that no obstacle that is not absolutely inevitable will be placed in the way of publishing this brief report as suggested. It is one that will be of general interest and value to Departments and research workers overseas, to whom we are indebted for substantial gifts of their own publications, many of which are still being received, although it is a long time since we were able to make any return.

MARINE RESEARCH

No fresh ground has been broken during the past year: not for want of problems that call for attention, but through lack of material facilities and staff, which one hopes is only temporarily inevitable. Mr. A. M. Rapson has been working at a general report on the life-history of the blue cod, and in the field has continued his observation on toheroa distribution, reproduction, and growth. He has paid occasional visits to Queen Charlotte Sound in connection with the study of the sardine fishery, and has continued to collect plankton samples when possible for the study of the pelagic eggs and larval stages of fishes.

A. E. HEFFORD,

Chief Inspector of Fisheries and Director of Fishery Research.

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