

Amendments of the Fishery Regulations have been made to allow netting for indigenous fish in the Taieri River up to the ferry; to extend the close season for seals; to increase the minimum weight at which blue-cod may be taken and sold to 16 oz., and to make the minimum weight at which they may be sold when gutted and headed 11 oz.; prohibiting taking fish except eels in Victoria Valley, Toatoa River, and Lake Ngatai; to close the Kaipara Oyster-fishery; to make a two-years close season for oysters on the Waimea mud-flats; to alter the dates of the open oyster season in the South Island and Stewart Island; and as to the use of whitebait set-nets in Westland and Taranaki.

The close season for Risso's Dolphin ("Pelorus Jack") has been extended to the 31st May, 1914.

The Chatham Islands has been made a place of registry for fishing-boats.

*Whaling.*—The Department has received a great many communications from firms in Norway, Great Britain, and Australia, asking for information concerning whaling concessions in the Dominion. Some of them desire to moor floating factories in suitable harbours, and others want sites on which to erect shore factories. They have been informed that there is no law to prevent any one whaling in New Zealand, or to prevent the mooring of floating factories, provided the Harbour and Public Health Regulations are complied with. In reference to shore sites, they have been told that nothing can be done as regards these until specific sites are applied for. Messrs. Cook Bros., who have had a whaling-station at Whangamumu, near the Bay of Islands, for several years past, have extended their operations to Campbell Island. The lessees of that island also carry on whaling there as a part of their occupation, but it is understood that the number of whales taken has not been large.

Returns showing the number of registered fishing-boats at the various ports, and the prosecutions for breaches of the Fisheries Act, are appended.

*Portobello Marine Fish-hatchery.*—I visited this station on the 24th ultimo, and found that a good deal of improvement-work has been carried out since my last visit. Alterations have been made in some of the ponds, and improvements made in the hatching-shed. An addition has been made to the cottage of the curator's assistant, and a garden laid out, fenced in, and protected by a breakwind on the south-west side. The whole work has been done in a most economical manner, and reflects credit on the Board, the curator, and his assistant. The station is managed by an honorary Board, which carries out the administration duties without expense. Valuable investigation-work in connection with New Zealand fishes is being carried out, and large numbers of flat-fish eggs are taken and put into the harbour. Nothing so far has been seen of the young lobsters and edible crabs which have been liberated, but it is early yet for them to be seen. It is advisable to import a fresh supply of live lobsters and crabs from England for breeding purposes, and this can be done when importing a trial shipment of herring-ova if it is decided to obtain such ova. The whole cost to the Department of the hatchery during last financial year was £458 17s. 4d., being a grant to the Board of £330 for the salaries of the curator and his assistant, and £128 17s. 4d. for alteration of ponds and repairs.

Valuable and interesting reports by Mr. G. M. Thomson, M.P., Chairman of the Hatchery Board, and Mr. Anderton, curator, are appended.

*Herring.*—For some time past the Fishery Board of Scotland has, at the request of this Department, been making experiments in retarding the hatching of herring-ova, with the view of seeing whether they could be retarded long enough to enable them to be brought out to New Zealand. The result of the experiments is that hatching has been retarded for fifty days. The Board's Scientific Superintendent advises that a trial shipment of fertilized ova should now be made. The value of the herring as an addition to the food fishes of the Dominion would be so great that I strongly recommend that an attempt should be made to introduce the ova during the coming season. Even if the first attempt is not successful, the experience gained would doubtless result in success with later shipments. If it is decided to make the attempt, it would be advisable to send Mr. Anderton, curator of the Portobello Hatchery, to England to arrange for the shipment and to bring it out, as his experience in treating and dealing with delicate fish-ova at the hatchery has been such that I think if any one can bring the ova out successfully he can. He could at the same time arrange for and bring out a further supply of live lobsters and crabs, and also a few live haddocks.

The following persons have been appointed Inspectors of Sea-fishing, viz.: W. A. Brookes, W. G. Wohlmann, J. M. O'Connor, T. M. Condon, W. E. Cobeldick, J. Main, W. J. Williams, and F. A. Franks.

*Salmon.*—No salmon-ova were imported last year, but it is advisable that a shipment of at least a million Atlantic-salmon ova should be obtained from Great Britain during the next season. It is still too early to see whether the former shipments will prove successful, but importation should go on until time shows whether the attempts to introduce this fish have succeeded or not. The success obtained with quinnat salmon justifies the belief that there will also be success with Atlantic salmon. Last season 240,000 quinnat ova were collected from fish taken in the tributaries of the Waitaki River, and of these 22,500 were supplied to the Tasmanian Government, 157,500 were put in a tributary of the Hokitika River, 3,000 fry were liberated in the Seaforth-Mackenzie River, and the balance were kept at the Hakataramea Hatchery for liberation later on. Ova is now being collected from fish which are spawning in the tributaries of the Waitaki, most of which will be put into the Hokitika River.

*Trout.*—Last season requests were received from acclimatization societies for 760,000 brown-trout ova, but, owing to floods carrying away some of the nets set to catch the spawning fish, the Department was able to take only 580,000, and it therefore had to obtain 180,000 from the Otago Society to enable all the requests to be complied with. The ova were sold to the societies at 5s. per thousand. 100,000 rainbow-trout ova were also taken and supplied to the Queensland Government.

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The Hon. the Minister of Marine, Wellington.

GEORGE ALLPORT, Secretary.