

The scientific investigation of the thermal lakes in the relation of their insects, plants, and aquatic life as trout-food has been taken in hand. Some hundreds of trout-stomachs have been examined, and many waters chemically analysed, while the various forms of plant and weed life, with their myriads of minute insect-life, have been carefully tabulated.

Fur-opossums.—The open season last year for the taking of opossums was for one month—from the 1st June to the 30th June. Some seventeen licenses were issued at a fee of £2 10s. each, and a total of 1,654 skins were taken. Many of the licensees were novices, and the catches ran from less than a dozen to the highest tally of 320 skins per man.

Feathered Game.—The season for feathered game was opened last year for a period of two months—from the 1st May to the 30th June. It is quite evident to any interested observer that the game of all kinds is fast becoming scarcer every year. Even on many sanctuaries the numbers are less than in former years. It will be necessary, if sportsmen are to look forward to any shooting in a few years' time, to curtail the usual three-monthly season to two months; and, later, if a district will not give sufficient game, it will be necessary to still shorten the season to one month's shooting.

The rearing operations carried out by the Department's Ranger this year have been most successful, and constitute a record for any previous pheasant-raising operations undertaken by this Department. A total of 512 young pheasants have been reared, of which 400 were distributed over a very wide area of this district. The balance are being held at the pheasantry for stock-breeding selection and to provide any acclimatization society with a few birds for breeding or liberation.

Red Deer.—The open season for the Rotorua red-deer herds opened from the 27th March to the 27th April last year. The Galatea herd was closed, and was very carefully inspected and culled of nineteen deer of a poor standard, and as a number of Warnham Court strain of both stags and hinds have been liberated this should result in this herd being kept up to a high standard. The opening days of this season have already yielded from this herd some fine heads, ranging from ten to fifteen points, and of very symmetrical shape and heavy horn, which fully justified the closing and culling last year.

The Rotoiti herd produced the finest head last year that was secured from any herd in the district, a beautifully shaped sixteen-pointer, which fell to the rifle of Mr. A. Bennett, of Pongakawa.

The Okareka herd also produced a number of good heads, those secured by Farrow Brothers and party being the most notable, several being above the average type and carrying twelve to fifteen points. In the proximity of Okareka Lake itself, and on the open fern country with little feed and cover, the deer were not of a good type, some having narrow, thin antlers, and were very light in the horn. Owing to the complaints of damage by deer in this area, some eighteen permits have been issued to settlers and the Forestry Service to thin out these deer. This should result in keeping the number of deer reduced, and may lead to an improvement in the type of heads.

The Waikaremoana herd, contained in the great forest area surrounding the lake, is a typical bush herd, and holds some of the finest stags in this Dominion. Owing to the difficulty of "still hunting" in the dense bush cover, it is extremely hard for the average stalker, used to more open country, to successfully approach his stag close enough to secure it with a first shot, while a second one is almost impossible.

The new herd in the Taupo-Tokaanu area was open for the first time this year, on the 26th March, and so far a fourteen- and a sixteen-pointer have been secured by Messrs. R. Levin and E. Riddiford. This is the making of a specially good herd, and will need to be carefully fostered for a few years yet.

Blue Wrens.—A consignment of the indigenous Australian insectivorous birds, twelve of the blue wrens, or Superb warblers (*Malurus cyaneochlamys*) were received from the Sydney Zoological Gardens. These beautiful little wrens were fed on insects for some two or three weeks at the pheasantry, in order to allow them to become familiar with the change of food and difference in climatic changes. They were then liberated by the Ranger in several selected localities at different places in the Whakatane, Rotorua, and West Taupo Counties. It is hoped to procure some Welcome swallows from the Director of the Sydney Zoo. They are distinctly insect-eaters, and rapid fliers, and have spread to most parts of the world, yet they are quite unknown in New Zealand. It is thus possible that the expected importation will find food conditions and climate so favourable in this Dominion that it may remain here permanently.

Kaoro, Fry Carp, Tuataras, and Ferns.—In order to provide an exhibit of the fish and reptilian sections for the Empire Exhibition, the Departmental Ranger, W. Cobeldick, secured a number of specimens of the unique indigenous little fish *Galaxias huttoni*, or kaoro, from the underground rivers flowing from beneath the Tongariro Mountain into Lake Rotoaira. These, together with a number of the now rare tuatara lizards, captured on some rocky islets in the Bay of Plenty, will be sent to England with a number of other exhibits. One can of rainbow-trout fry and one of gold carp were also presented to the Wellington Zoological Gardens, and a large and varied assortment of typical New Zealand ferns was collected and despatched to Ireland to Lord Dunleath's estate.

Thanks of Department.—The thanks of this Department is due to those officers of the Police Department, and to its active honorary rangers, and the executive officers of the Wairoa and Whakatane Rod and Gun Clubs, for their ready co-operation, often under difficulties, in carrying out the provisions of the Fisheries and Game Acts and regulations.

Bath Buildings: Balneologist's Report.

During the past year there have been fewer visitors to Rotorua, and in consequence the receipts, as shown, have decreased. This was due, no doubt, to the general financial depression and the general election, when the people of the Dominion remained in their own districts; also, false reports regarding the Taupo earthquakes, published in the Australian and American Press, which created a