The North Otago Shelf Fauna. Part VI—Chordata Sub-Class Cyclostomata

By John Graham,
Oamaru

Abstract

Two species of the Cyclostomata, *Eptratretus cirrhatus* and *Geotria australis* are listed and abundance noted.

Introduction

The "hag-fish" and lamprey are both easily identified and well known. The former has been taken in considerable numbers during commercial fishing operations from 1957 to 1963. The presence of the latter in the Kakanui River is well established and the capture of specimens in the surf at that river mouth confirms its marine excursions in this area. The four North Otago shelf zones, described in Part V of this series above, are applicable here.

Checklist of Cyclostomata from the North Otago Shelf

Abbreviations. 1, zone 1; 2, zone 2; 3, zone 3; 4, zone 4; C, common; U, uncommon.

Myxinidae.

Eptratretus cirrhatus (Bloch & Schn.) 1 U, 2 C, 3 C, 4 C.

Petromyzonidae.

Geotria australis Gray. 1 U.

Discussion

Eptratretus cirrhatus is widely and plentifully distributed on the North Otago shelf. They are observed periodically investigating the waste effluent from the fish depot in the Oamaru Harbour. Whenever the baited hooks of set lines are laid too close to the bottom at any depth, they almost invariably take, or are fouled by, great numbers of these animals. Such hooks are sometimes swallowed and are unpleasantly difficult to disengage because of the continual writhing of the animal and the offensive exudation of slime. As such fouled hooks and snooding apparently repel fishes they are the better discarded. "Hag-fish" are not often taken in a commercial trawl (passing through the meshes) but where bottom debris is collected and packed tightly along the wire-rope net extensions (Graham, 1963) the flayed skins are sometimes found in considerable numbers.

Although only a few specimens of *Geotria australis*, taken by hand-net in the breakers at the Kakanui River mouth, have been noted by the author, their reported concentration at a mill dam some few miles up-river suggests a periodically denser marine population.