

fined—the first two £2 and costs each, and the last-named £1 and costs; the yacht used, which was a hired one, was returned to its owner on payment of £8 1s. A. Kirk and F. Messenger were fined—the former £5 and costs and the latter £3 and costs, and their boat was sold. C. Petters was fined £5 and costs, but W. Knox, who assisted in committing the offence, did not appear, and could not be found; their boat was sold. M. Garnaut and J. Wilson were fined—the former £3 and costs and the latter £5 and costs, but H. Arthur, who was one of the party, could not be found; their boat was sold. Two Waiheke Island Natives, named Adams and Walker, were fined £5 and costs each; their boat was returned to them on payment of a further sum of £2 18s. 6d. All these prosecutions took place at Auckland, with the exception of that of Rolton and Humphries, in which case the conviction was obtained at the Thames.

The following licenses to occupy foreshore for the formation and cultivation of artificial beds were issued during the year: P. Neame, 16½ acres, Mahau, Pelorus Sound; J. J. Daily, 7½ acres, Heathcote Estuary; M. Banton, 4 acres, Purau Bay, Lyttelton; J. S. A. Deeming and Sons, 2¼ acres, Bay of Islands.

*Sea-fisheries.*—During the last session of Parliament the Sea-fisheries Act was amended, and provision was made enabling the Governor in Council to declare that any particular species or description of edible shell-fish and sponge-beds should be subject to the provisions of the law relating to oysters or oyster-beds. This provision was made so that there might be power to protect and regulate the use of mussel and other shellfish beds, to enable rights to be granted for the culture of shellfish, and, as regards sponge-beds, it was desired that there should be power to enable the discoverer of a sponge-bed to obtain the exclusive right to it for a limited period. Advantage has been taken of the power regarding shellfish to bring lobsters and crabs under the provisions of the Act relating to oysters, and Mr. J. J. Daily, of Sydenham, has been granted a license to occupy a portion of the foreshore and tidal land of the Heathcote Estuary for the purpose of the propagation of these crustacea. The general fishing regulations have been consolidated and made under “The Sea-fisheries Act, 1894.”

Representations were made to the department that net-fishing in the Wanganui River was considerably diminishing the number of flounders in the river, and also that trout were caught in the nets. It was urged that the use of nets above the town bridge should be prohibited, and that a close season of four months in the year should be made for the portion of the river below that bridge. After making full inquiry into the matter, including the effect which such a prohibition and a close season would have upon the fishermen, it was decided to prohibit the use of nets in the portion of the river above the Aramoho Railway bridge for one year, and this has accordingly been done. The question of extending the close period will be considered during the year. Sir James Hector, who was asked to make inquiry and report as to the advisability or otherwise of a close season for mullet, having reported against the continuance of the close season which was then in force between Whangaruru and the North Cape, it has been revoked, and there is therefore now no close season for this fish in the colony, with the exception of a small portion of Kaipara Harbour. The reports made by Sir James, and notes of the evidence taken by him, are now being printed under his supervision for presentation to Parliament. The practice of using jiggers—that is, appliances formed of pieces of metal or other substance attached to a line and placed in a river or stream for the purpose of turning whitebait into nets—having come into vogue, and such practice having proved detrimental to fair fishing by preventing persons higher up the river from getting fish in any quantity, regulations have been made prohibiting the practice. The use of herring-nets with 1½ in. mesh in Lake Ellesmere has been authorised.

The close season for seals has been extended up to the 30th June, 1898. The lessee of the Auckland Islands applied for permission to kill sea-lions on those islands on the ground that they injure the grass. As this could not be done without declaring an open season for taking the sea-lion—a species of seal—under cover of which the fur seal might be taken, the Government did not see their way to accede to his request. The principal keeper at Cape Foulwind Lighthouse, who visited the Steeples Rocks in January last, reported that he found the seals there fairly numerous, with a fair proportion of young ones. On the 27th June last W. Lewis and G. Brown were fined £2 each at Ashburton for having a seal in possession, and on the 27th August W. O. McFie was fined £5 and costs for being in possession of a seal at Waikouaiti.

Sergeant White, of Greymouth, has been appointed an Inspector of Fisheries, in place of Constable Wildermoth, who has been removed to another place.

It having been found that the requirements of the law, especially as to emptying nets in the water, were not observed by some of the fishermen in Otago Harbour, it was decided to appoint a special Inspector for six months to see the law enforced, and Mr. D. H. Hastings has been selected for the position. There have been three convictions during the year for catching fish below the minimum size prescribed by the regulations—viz., May and Bruce, of Porirua, who were fined £5 and costs; F. Becker, of Saltwater Creek, Canterbury, fined £3 and costs; and W. J. Bruce, of New Brighton, who was fined £1 and costs. In the last two cases the nets used were seized and forfeited.

*Weather Reporting.*—Captain Edwin has continued to perform the duty of making daily weather forecasts, and circulating them throughout the colony. Many of the instruments used for weather-reporting purposes not being so reliable as they should be, especially for the most important stations, it has been decided to procure a supply of standard barometers, barographs, and thermometers from England.

*Examination of Masters, Mates, and Engineers.*—One hundred and twenty-five candidates passed their examinations for certificates of competency, and fifty-six failed. Of those who passed eighty-nine were masters, mates, and engineers of sea-going vessels, and thirty-six were masters and engineers of steamers plying within restricted limits. Seven certificates of service were issued. New regulations for the examination of masters and mates, similar to regulations made by the