

piers, it being necessary to prepare special forms of petition showing from information supplied by the Valuer-General the holdings of the occupiers in each proposed district.

Land Drainage and River Districts.—Four drainage districts were constituted, and the boundaries of three were altered during the year. Several petitions are still under consideration.

Two river districts were constituted and the boundaries of one were altered; one district was abolished.

One petition for constitution of a district was referred back to the petitioners in order that an additional area might be included.

An important and necessary addition to the Hawke's Bay Rivers District, involving the inclusion of the Hastings Borough and a portion of Napier, was under consideration. The Commission appointed under section 6 of the River Boards Amendment Act, 1913, strongly recommended the proposal, but owing to advice that no alteration of this district can be made without legislation no further action was taken. For the same reason consideration was not given to a subsequent petition for exclusion of a certain area.

Lake Coleridge Water-power Act, 1915.—Several applications by the Heathcote County Council under this Act for powers of Borough Councils with respect to lighting and the supply of electricity were granted, and another is under consideration. The Act needs amending in the direction of allowing the powers to be conferred on local bodies purchasing their supplies not directly from the Public Works Department, but from the Christchurch City Council.

Cost of Living Act, 1915.—It is to be regretted that, despite a circular to all Borough Councils drawing their attention to its provisions, only one application has been received under section 13 of the Act, and that one (by the Wanganui Borough Council) was, ironically enough, for regulations authorizing the manufacture and sale of bricks. Even this application has apparently been dropped.

(2.) *Inland Fisheries.*

As will be seen from the annual report of the Conservator of Fish and Game printed in the Appendix hereto, the Rotorua and Taupo fisheries have been developed in conformity with the settled policy. The total output of marketable fish for the period 1st November, 1916, to 31st March, 1917, was 42,995 fish, weighing 35 tons, as against 51,601 fish, weighing 43 tons, for the corresponding period 1915-16. This decrease was almost solely due to weather conditions and the difficulty of securing suitable labour for the depot at Tokaanu. At Rotorua, while the total number of fish caught was 1,212 less than last season, the total weight was 4 tons more. This in itself is evidence that the Department's efforts have already resulted in a marked improvement in the condition of the fish in that lake.

During the hot weather experienced last summer the Taupo fish, which has to be sent forward by coach from Tokaanu to Waiouru, occasionally arrived in Wellington unfit for human consumption, and had to be destroyed. The new road from Tokaanu to Waimarino, which it is hoped will be open to traffic this coming summer, will enable the fish to be carried to the railway much more quickly, and will prevent any recurrence of this undesirable state of affairs.

Early in the season the question of erecting a cool chamber at Rotorua was given consideration. Plans were submitted by the Public Works Department, but it was decided to take no action at present.

Study of Worm Parasite.—The experimental ponds at Rotorua are being maintained. The examination of the trout from these ponds, which has been carried out systematically by the Director, Veterinary Division, Department of Agriculture, has now established the fact that the parasite is caused by the shags. An interesting report by Dr. Reakes on the result of the investigations is appended to this report.

Shags.—The work of destroying shags around the lakes of the thermal region is being vigorously carried on. The Department pays 2s. 6d. for each bird destroyed, the total number accounted for during the year being 1,432.

Trout-hatchery.—The Conservator's report discloses a satisfactory season, though on account of the shortage of labour the output of fry and ova was not as large as in the previous year.

Canterbury Rivers.—Pursuant to your direction reports on the possibility of obtaining supplies of marketable trout from the Canterbury rivers were obtained. It is much to be regretted that all the evidence points to the fact that if these rivers are worked with nets it will mean their ultimate depletion.

(3.) *Animals Protection Act.*

Though 1916 was a close season under the Animals Protection Act, game was so abundant as to lead to all but seven acclimatization societies applying for exemption.

Sanctuaries.—Six new sanctuaries were declared.

Damage by Deer.—As the result of further investigation of reported damage, protection was removed from fallow deer in the Rongahere (Otago) District. Protection was also removed from deer on certain islands in Tasman Bay, Nelson Acclimatization District.

Deterioration of Deer Herds.—Special shooting seasons to allow of systematic culling operations were declared in Otago and Waitaki Districts.

Huias.—Further reports of the existence of huias are being investigated.

The Tuatara.—The lightkeepers at Stephen, The Brothers, and Cuvier Islands, by constant shooting of hawks and cats, have arrested the decrease of the tuatara. It is interesting to note that the hawks on Stephen Island do not remain on the island all the year round, but leave with the approach of winter and return some time in early summer.

General.—One district (North Canterbury) was redefined, and the rules of the Ashburton, North Canterbury, and Otago Societies were deposited.