

The finest river fishing was, however, obtained in the Waikato River from below the Huka Falls to the Arapuni Lake boundary below Ongaroto. The heavy restocking of the past few years by this Department over this area is now giving great results. It is the intention to do more clearing of scrub along the banks, as in many places the best trout have their feeding-grounds along these almost-inaccessible places.

Feathered Game.—The season was not noted for large bags of feathered game generally, and the weather was too fine overhead to conduce to the shooting of limit bags of ducks during the first week of the opening. After the first few hours of gun-fire the birds simply congregated in hundreds on the sanctuaries, but with the later advent of rough, squally weather they got on the move over their old lines of travel, and thereafter better sport was obtained. On some favourite feeding-grounds the limit of twenty ducks or twenty head in all of native game was shot several times throughout the season on the Rangitaiki Swamp, Tarawera Swamp, Edgumbe lagoons, Opotiki district lagoons and rivers, Waikato River, and Whakaki and other Wairoa County lagoons.

Splendid shooting as regards ducks and swans was obtained on Loch Invar, Lake Rerewhakaitu, and Taupo; and also along the Upper Rangitaiki, Whirinaki, Waipunga River, and Runanga lagoons, and Mohaka River the shooters got many brace of fat ducks. The spoonbill duck was not plentiful, and black teal and pukeko were not open for shooting.

Godwits: The godwit season was the best for several seasons past, the birds being in prime condition on the 1st February. Those shooters with motor-cars or who lived adjacent to the beaches and mud-flat estuaries of the Bay of Plenty area or the rich feeding-grounds of the Opotiki and Wairoa Counties got large numbers of this migratory species. The golden plovers and turnstones were not nearly so plentiful, nor did the knots put in their annual appearance in anything like the numbers of previous years.

Imported game, both pheasants and quail, were fairly plentiful, good bags of the former cock birds being shot round the scattered maize-patches, and several large bags of quail were taken mostly from the heavy-scrub country. One party of three guns got over four hundred in five days near Mount Tarawera. The limit of ten cocks per gun a day was recorded in the Wairoa, Opotiki, Whakatane, and Rangitaiki areas in well-favoured situations, but others, not having good gun-dogs to assist them, did not prove so fortunate. About the Upper Rangitaiki Plain and the bush areas of Opape, Mokai, Oruanui, also the scrub valleys around Taupo Lake, some good pheasants were shot, and both pheasants and quail through the Upper Tokoroa, Ongaroto, and Atiamuri Valleys. Quail were also plentiful on the Kaingaroa Plain in sheltered places, and where the feed, cover, and a good breeding season allowed a good natural increase of the wild stock fine shooting was obtained. In the more settled areas the big flocks of some years ago have dwindled to small coveys of half a dozen to twenty quail, having either been shot off or moved away to better feeding-grounds, where they are less harassed by pests such as stoats, hawks, weasels, and cats.

The Virginian quail is slowly spreading over the Wairoa County, where they were first liberated, and small coveys have been seen in the heart of the bush at Waikaremoana, Upper Ruakituri, and Mohaka Valleys. Two pairs of clutches of chicks were observed along the Waipunga River, but the natural increase of this specie is not nearly what it should be with the amount of visible food-supply available.

Sportsmen complain of the plethora of hen pheasants everywhere, and express opinions that many are old, and that a season should be opened to allow them to be shot. Even if the Animals Protection Act was amended to permit of hens being shot, it could only result in greater and widespread reduction of the natural stock of wild birds throughout the country than any other means now functioning towards this end, and would only result in defeating the sole object in view, that of keeping up an artificial annual supply of fresh blood to add to the natural increase of the wild birds themselves. There is no fear of disturbing the balance of nature by shooting male birds only. The natural enemies will soon account for any old hens that are beyond their breeding-capacity. It is not always because no young chicks can be seen where the hens are in superior numbers that these hens have not laid, but often because the nests have been raided and the eggs or tiny chicks eaten during the nesting season by pests.

Opossums.—There was a closed season for opossums throughout the district in 1929. The need for some conservation was clearly indicated in the rapid reduction of the number of skins taken last open season compared with those of the first few seasons. The Waikaremoana skins realize the highest market value for the best black pelts when properly cleaned and stretched.

Liberation of Trout-fry.—During the past season this Department's rangers concentrated on the work of rearing and liberating rainbow-trout fry in almost the whole of the lakes and streams of the district. The following list shows the areas and quantities of the rainbow fry liberated:—

In Wairoa County—

Lakes Waikaremoana, Wairauoana, Kaitawa, Rotokiokio, Te Kiri-o-pupae, and Waikareiti	Number of Fry.
Ruakituri Valley, Mangaruhe Valley, Waikare-ta-heke River, and Waihou River	197,000
In Taupo County rivers	52,000
In Whakatane County rivers	150,000
In Opotiki rivers	208,000
In Rotorua County lakes and rivers (liberated by Internal Affairs Department)	145,000
In Rotorua County lakes and rivers—Ova planted	1,635,000
	300,000

Total fry and ova liberated	2,687,000
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