

The Thames fisheries, on the whole, had a fairly good year. An increased number of vessels worked at all classes of fishing, more especially at Danish seining and long-lining, and more fish came into the depots, both from the Thames boats and overland from Mercury Bay, than in the previous year. During the months of September, October, and November a limit was placed on the quantities of flat fish caught, the supply exceeding the demand, owing, presumably, to the failure of the usual Australian market.

It is reported that some of the Danish-seine fishermen were this year for the first time put on a wage-payment system, instead of on shares—a further indication that supplies were more than able to cope with demand.

Sharks of all sorts, mainly small, were unusually abundant in the Auckland District, and especially in the Thames Firth, during the summer, and were a nuisance to both line and net fishermen. There would appear to be scope for a fish-reduction (oil and meal or fertilizer) plant at Thames which, besides dealing with the usual fish offal, would be able to make profitable use of these at present merely noxious fishes. The difficulty is that they are not of constant occurrence. They make their appearance in the upper part of the Firth of Thames with remarkable regularity at the beginning of each summer, but their abundance varies from year to year.

Prior to the disastrous earthquake on the 3rd February, 1931, the Napier fishing fleet had been operating with more than average success. Flat fish are reported to have been in considerable abundance, and catches of round fish better than the average of the last few years. After the earthquake the demand for fish at Napier went down, and, with the wharves raised about 7 ft. above their original level, the difficulties of coaling, filling water-tanks, and landing fish have been considerably increased. The number of trawlers operating and the time each spent on the fishing-grounds have consequently suffered a temporary diminution. From information gathered from various skippers it would appear that the trawling-grounds have not altered to any appreciable extent, except in the vicinity of Clive and Tangoio. Off Clive the bottom, originally hard, is now covered with blue mud, which makes it impossible to tow a trawl. Prior to the upheaval the ground off Tangoio was also smooth and firm, and most suitable for trawling, but a considerable area of ground has since been found to be foul from the presence of stumps of trees, on which several nets have been lost or damaged. Many cockle and pipi beds in Hawke's Bay have been totally destroyed by having been lifted above the level of the tides.

With regard to the fisheries of the Wellington District we have not the close acquaintance and systematic information which are desirable and necessary. The fishing for the year was not up to average productivity. This is partly owing to the abnormal prevalence of stormy weather, but there also appears to be reason for concluding that the well-fished grounds in the neighbourhood of Cook Strait have been more intensively worked of recent years than is consistent with rational and economical exploitation. The question is a very complicated one, however, and cannot be elucidated until truly statistical evidence as to the results of fishing operations is available.

The sea-fisheries of Canterbury and Otago were considerably affected by bad weather. Apart from this, however, there was in certain areas a general scarcity of line fish, especially of groper, and the opinion has been generally expressed among Otago fishermen that it is advisable to place restrictions upon the taking of these fish at the season when they are spawning or about to spawn. The use of long lines has lately become more prevalent for groper-fishing. Some fishermen are inclined to ascribe the present scarcity to this practice, thinking that the dead fish on long lines, which are not infrequently lost, tend to pollute the fishing-grounds. I do not think there is any likelihood of appreciable pollution thus occurring. The effect of long lines, in my opinion, is to bring about a decided increase in the number of fish abstracted from an already depleted stock. The question demands more investigation than I have been able to give to it. Restrictions on the fishing by regulation would not be easy to apply without bearing hard upon certain classes of fishermen, but if the grounds for the necessity of such restrictions were clearly apparent there would be no hesitation in recommending them.

The trawl fisheries, especially off the Canterbury coast, have apparently been better than average. In summer and autumn good catches of dabs (sand-flounder or "three-cornered flounder"—*Rhombosolea plebeia*) of large size were landed.

It was remarked that the pelagic crustaceans popularly known as "whale-feed" (*Munida gregaria*) were about two months later than usual in appearing in the inshore waters of Otago. They usually enter Otago Harbour during the first week in November, but this year they had not put in an appearance at the end of December. This had a marked effect on the inshore fisheries, since fish of various kinds invariably follow the shoals of "feed" when they come in.

The blue-cod fisheries pursued by the fishermen of Stewart Island and Chatham Islands are largely dependent upon the export trade, and the depression of the Australian markets seriously affected the demand for the produce of these fisheries, to the great detriment of the fishermen and merchants.

The West Coast fisheries (South Island) still remain relatively unexploited owing to absence of local consumers and remoteness from the markets of the larger centres of population. This year more regular supplies were landed at Greymouth from the operations of a Westport steamer working the Danish seine, which is now to be permanently established at Greymouth.

The statistics of imports and exports of fish and shell-fish for the year are shown in Table V, in which the exports of frozen blue cod, snapper, and flounders are separately distinguished, as are also the ports from which frozen fish was shipped. This year, for the first time, the exports of tinned white-bait and toheroas, as well as oysters, are separately shown.