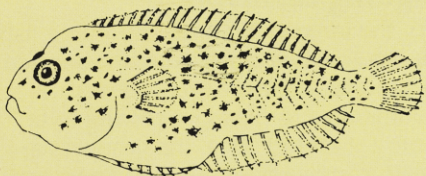


Table 1: Abundance and productivity of single species of copepods in various estuaries.

Location	Average Density	Production
	No. Animals per square metre	Grams of carbon per square metre per year
Dievengat Lagoon (Belgium)	31 700	0.11
Nanaimo Estuary (Canada)	6 300	0.07
Puget Sound (USA)	160 000	0.7 – 1.7
North Inlet (USA)	188 000	0.06
Pauatahanui Inlet (NZ)	263 000	0.9 – 3.6

The final actor in the food chain. Many wading birds such as this white faced heron have as their staple diet the very same postage stamp-sized fish that have been nursed through to takable size on a diet of raw copepod. A study in Otago Harbour of Stewart Island shags has shown that one bird can eat as many as 340 young fish a day, of which a large proportion are flatfish. As this food chain demonstrates, the birds would not exist without any of the other elements they depend on — good reason for why we must guard against any reclamation or other major development in any part of the inlet, not just the reserve. *Photo: David Cornick*



The extraordinary productivity of the copepod is capitalised on by juvenile flatfish such as the sand flounder (above), the yellow-bellied flounder and the New Zealand sole. During their first six months of life on the bottom, the postage stamp-sized flatfish feed on essentially nothing but the copepod, but later grow too large to eat the tiny crustaceans and switch to larger prey such as crabs and worms.

Artist: Vivan Ward