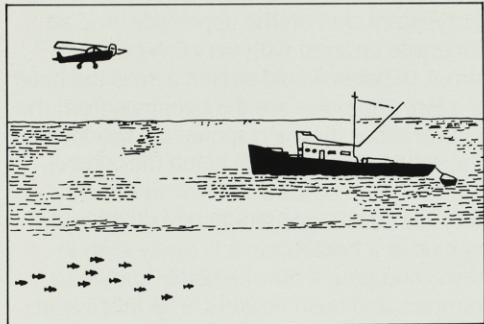


trevally because of the Quota System. Of course the marlin had made a tremendous comeback because of the ban on commercial bill-fishing (the smartest move MAF ever made) but this was relevant only to the tourist fishery and a limited number of kiwis with the gear to pursue marlin.

Bad News Travels Fast

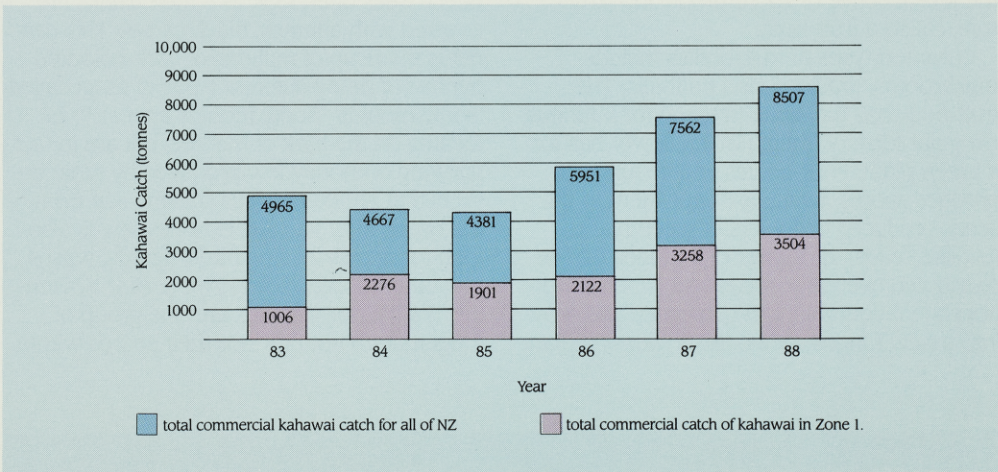
No news travels as fast as bad news in the sport fishing world. The decline in the small game (kahawai, kingfish) sport fishery correlated well with the decrease in American tourism. The marlin fishing had been better in America than New Zealand for over 20 years so few Americans came here to pursue bill fish anyway. Their main interest was in light tackle inshore fishing. No one was writing glowing reports of sport fishing in New Zealand anymore because, by 1988, the salt-water fishing was better around New York City, Baltimore or Washington! Due to bad management the New Zealanders had lost most of their fish and their tourist income in one blow.



Purse seiners use spotter planes to find the largest kahawai schools over vast areas of water. This makes it possible for the purse seiners to keep working even when the kahawai are severely depleted.

By 1990 the fishery in Doubtless Bay and Mangonui Harbour had deteriorated even further. The combined effect of the purse seiners scooping up thousands of tonnes of kahawai and the gill nets taking hundreds of tonnes of kingfish resulted in a pretty grim situation. For the first time in living memory NO kingfish schools came in to feed around the Mangonui wharf. There were also no juvenile kahawai to be found feeding in the harbour. Out in the bay things were not much better. In February and March a few small schools of kahawai were found feeding on anchovies but there were almost no other kahawai to be seen. Medium size kingfish were found sporadically in the bay but the only kingfish found in numbers were small juveniles that normally avoid reefs and so could evade the deadly gill nets. To add insult to injury, commercial long liners were now targeting these juvenile kingfish outside Doubtless Bay by using floating long lines, effectively eliminating any hope of the kingfish recovering in less than five years.

And what happened to our American sport fisherman who had come to Mangonui so impressed by New Zealand's sea life? He was forced to rethink his decision to come to New Zealand. He could no longer count on catching a meal for his family, let alone having a chance to hook big enough fish to make the day's sport worthwhile. Back in North America the fishery managers had realized the importance of recreational fishing and had been making real improvements in the con-



The rise in the kahawai catch in Zone 1 correlates well with reports of declining numbers caught by amateurs in that area.

trol of the commercial sector throughout the 1980s. Where fishery managers had acted with courage the results had been spectacular. King mackerel and Spanish mackerel populations were booming in Florida, the salmon and bottom fish were doing well in British Columbia and the striped bass fishery was even coming back in the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland.

By 1990 better fishing could be had around most American cities than could be found in Northland. Though the environment around Mangonui was still beautiful and the people still friendly, the fish were gone. All the suggestions that the American had made to MAF had been ignored and even if they were implemented today it would take five to ten years before the fish populations achieved 1980 levels.

On the other hand, people in New Zealand were becoming more and more aware of how badly the inshore fishery was being run. Maori and Pakeha were beginning to speak out in anger at the corporate greed and complacent management that had devastated their sea life. Maybe things would improve now that the Government realised that hundreds of thousands of voters were concerned about the sport fishery. Anyway, where there's life, there's hope... 🐟

Mark Feldman is an American physician married to a New Zealander. He spends New Zealand summers with his family in Mangonui, Northland. He has held over 30 world and New Zealand fishing records. Most of his writing for the past five years has concentrated on the need for fisheries conservation in New Zealand.