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PARLIAMENT OF TASMANIA.

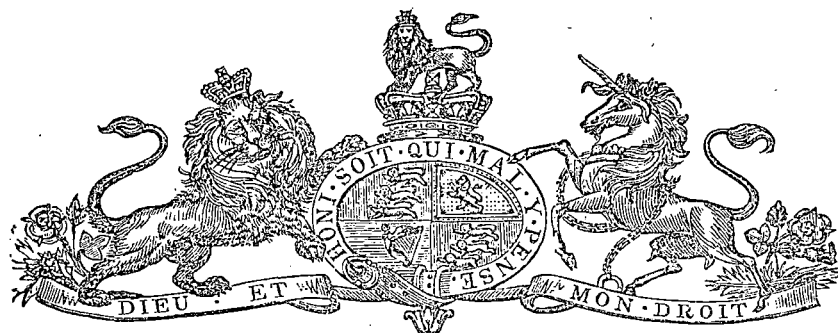
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FISHERIES DEPARTMENT:

REPORT FOR 1892-3.

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Presented to both Houses of Parliament by His Excellency's Command.



## FISHERIES DEPARTMENT.

### REPORT FOR 1892-3.

Hobart, 31st May, 1893.

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to submit the Report of the working of the Fisheries Department for the year 1892 and period to date of this Report, the fishing season ending 30th April each year.

#### FINANCE.

Season.	Receipts.			Expenditure.		
	Licences.	Salé of Ova.	Total.	General.	Special Vote for Destruction of Cormorants.	Total.
1891-92.....	£ s. d. 192 7 6	£ s. d. 10 12 6	£ s. d. 203 0 0	£ s. d. 381 19 0	£ s. d. 199 9 6	£ s. d. 581 8 6
1892-93.....	155 18 10	46 0 0	201 18 10	395 1 8	100 0 0	495 1 8

A marked falling-off will be noticed in the revenue received from Licences in the season just closed, due no doubt to the general state of depression existing throughout the country at the present time. However, the extra quantity of ova sold to various acclimatising societies in the other colonies brings up our total revenue to almost that of the preceding season. The expenditure is kept within the strictest bounds of economy compatible with the efficient working of the Department.

#### DESTRUCTION OF CORMORANTS.

The sum voted by Parliament for this purpose was carefully distributed by the Commissioners, with the assistance of the Police throughout the colony, and resulted in the destruction of a very large number of these voracious fish destroyers. About one-half of the £100 granted was spent in rewards at the rate of sixpence for the heads of all black and black and white cormorants shot upon inland waters, and the remaining half went as rewards at the rate of ninepence for black birds only, these latter having appeared in large numbers upon our rivers in the latter part of the year. The Commissioners regret that the reduction of the vote for this Department prevents a continuation during the current year of the destruction of these greedy river pests.

#### OYSTER CULTURE.

This industry is not at present in anything like a flourishing condition. The Tasmanian Fish and Oyster Company, who had secured the pick of the beds upon the East Coast, carried on operations for a time, and brought a plentiful supply of oysters to Hobart, and it was thought that they were in a fair way to revive an important industry. These operations have, however, apparently ceased, and oysters are now no longer being dredged by them for market. It is to be hoped that renewed attempts will be made to work these beds, as it seems absurd that, with known deposits of oysters upon our coasts, large sums of money should annually be remitted out of the colony in payment of importations from New South Wales and New Zealand.

The experiments being carried out by the Commissioners at Pipeclay Lagoon, where artificial beds have been laid down and enclosed for the purpose of artificial propagation, have not as yet turned out the success that was hoped. A supply of 5000 oysters were carefully selected at Swanport and placed in the beds, but great mortality has occurred amongst the fish, occasioned, it is believed, by the weakening effect of the extended passage of the vessel which conveyed them from the coast, due to unusual calms at the time. Arrangements have been made by which a further supply of oysters will be forwarded from the same spot, but in a more expeditious way.

With the kind assistance of Mr. Lindsay Thompson, Chief Inspector of Fisheries for New South Wales, the Commissioners have procured a large supply of Rock oysters from Sydney, which have been placed in various suitable places in the Derwent. There is at present no apparent reason why these oysters should not thrive in our waters, as a few obtained from Sydney in the year 1891 and deposited at Sandy Bay are still alive and healthy.

#### NATIVE HERRING OR CUCUMBER MULLET.

This valuable food fish having years ago disappeared from southern rivers, owing to an epidemic that depopulated these waters, an attempt is being made by the Commissioners to artificially re-stock them. To this end supplies of ova have been obtained from North Coast rivers, and, after being hatched at the Hatchery, the young fry were liberated in the Plenty. The Commissioners intend to repeat this experiment from year to year until success or otherwise is clearly shown.

#### NET FISHING IN RIVERS HUON AND DERWENT.

*Huon.*—During last year the Commissioners, at the invitation of the residents, journeyed to Franklin, and were pleased to be enabled to accede to a request of a deputation who waited upon them to urge that the then regulations as to netting in the Huon should be relaxed. Subject to certain restrictions, which the Commissioners considered absolutely necessary to ensure the preservation of the Salmonidæ which frequent this magnificent river, netting has been permitted for some miles above the old limit.

*Derwent.*—The limits up to which netting is allowed in the Derwent have also been extended.

#### NETTING IN INLAND WATERS.

Representations having been made to the Commissioners that a large quantity of available food in the shape of eels was annually lost to the country people by the absolute closing of the inland rivers to nets, regulations were framed allowing under certain restrictions the use of eel-nets in all inland waters. This concession was, strange to say, only availed of by the inhabitants in one district of the colony, and the following is a copy of the Report by the Superintendent of Police of the district in question upon the working of this new regulation :—

*Longford, 20th May, 1893.*

SIR,

I HAVE the honor to report, for the information of your Board, that I have made enquiries respecting the experiment of allowing the use of certain nets for the purpose of catching eels in inland rivers, when some thirteen (13) persons took advantage of this regulation and obtained the necessary licence.

I find the months of January, February, and March fixed upon by the Commissioners are very favourable for this purpose, and would suggest that the month of December also be included, this month being, I am informed, particularly suitable during some years.

I am also given to understand that much depends upon the state of the weather and rivers for the success of netting; if the rivers are low (which they are mostly during these months) with an occasional slight fresh, a plentiful supply of eels will be the result. On the other hand, should a strong flood appear, no eels scarcely will be obtained after. I regret that this has been the case during the late season, scarcely any eels being netted since the beginning of February, when a strong flood came down. Previously, however, when not so many had obtained licences, several good hauls of 100 and 200 lbs. were obtained. I might also mention that rarely any fish but eels enter these nets. I cannot hear of one solitary instance where a trout has been netted, and seldom blackfish or tench. In conclusion, I might say that should this again be allowed next year there will be many more than the last season apply for licences. Many were not aware that such was the case.

I have the honor, &c.

J. C. EAST, *Superintendent of Police, Longford.*

H. W. KNIGHT, *Esq., Secretary Commissioners of Fisheries, Hobart.*

The suggestion in the foregoing report of a small alteration in the regulations will be considered during the present year.

#### FISHERY STATISTICS.

The following is an approximate Return of Fish sold at the Hobart Fish Market during the past year. There being no recognised market in Launceston, any information as to the quantity of fish sold in the northern city is unobtainable.

Month.	Fish.		Crayfish.	
	Quantity.	Value.	Quantity.	Value.
1892.	Doz.	£ s. d.	Score.	£ s. d.
January .....	2499	473 14 0	120	30 0 0
February .....	2986	546 15 0	80	20 0 0
March.....	2276	560 11 6	180	45 0 0
April.....	3128	525 19 4	142	35 11 0
May.....	4037	397 16 8	230	57 10 0
June.....	3454	356 2 4	180	45 0 0
July.....	5216	551 5 4	160	40 0 0
August.....	3707	523 11 6	370	92 10 0
September.....	2671	401 4 8	224	61 12 0
October.....	3221	556 12 8	240	60 0 0
November.....	2302	450 2 0	210	52 10 0
December.....	2316	416 13 0	92	23 0 0
	37,793	5760 8 0	2228	562 13 0

Total values	{ Fish.....	£ s. d.
		5760 8 0
	{ Crayfish.....	562 13 0
		<u>6323 1 0</u>

Whilst the operations of our own fishermen are restricted, through the prohibitive regulations and duties imposed by the other colonies upon any importation of fish from Tasmania, to almost alone supplying the local demand, we hear of Victorian-owned boats fishing in our waters without paying any toll for the privilege, and then running their freights into Melbourne free of charge as Victorian fishermen. This matter will have the consideration of the Commissioners during the current year, as these fishermen are poaching upon the rights of our own men, and depleting our fishing banks.

#### WORK AT THE HATCHERY.

##### River Plenty.

Mr. Michael Jones, who was placed in temporary charge upon the death of Mr. Stannard, the previous Caretaker, has received appointment to the vacant post, and the conduct of the business at the Hatchery under his management has given satisfaction to the Commissioners.

##### Distribution of Ova and Fry—*Salmonidæ*.

The season having again been a favourable one, the Ova harvest has been a good one, and the following distribution has taken place :—

FRY.								OVA.			
<i>S. trutta and fario.</i>		<i>S. fontinalis.</i>		<i>S. levenensis.</i>		<i>S. salar.</i>		<i>S. trutta.</i>		<i>S. fario.</i>	
Where liberated.	Quantity.	Where liberated.	Quantity.	Where liberated.	Quantity.	Where liberated.	Quantity.	Where forwarded.	Quantity.	Where forwarded.	Quantity.
Northern Rivers	11,000	Northern Rivers	1500	Northern Rivers	Nil.	W. Coast Rivers	1150	Victoria	5000	Victoria	16,000
Inland Lakes...	Nil.	Inland Lakes...	2700	Inland Lakes...	2500			N. S. Wales	20,000	Queensland	5000
Southern Rivers	60,500	Southern Rivers	4700	Southern Rivers	750						
Total .....	71,500	Total .....	8900	Total .....	3250	Total .....	1150	Total ...	25,000	Total ...	21,000

Total Fry distributed, 84,800.

Total Ova exported, 46,000.

The *Salmo salar*, from Dr. Agnew's presentation shipment of Ova, retained in the Ponds for breeding purposes, spawned last season for the first time, and a quantity of the fry was conveyed by Mr. Alexander Morton to the North-West Coast, and liberated in a tributary of the Arthur, which empties into the West Coast. In consequence of the skill and care with which the young fish were carried, a very small percentage of mortality occurred upon the journey. An attempt to place some in Lake Dixon, with the view of stocking the River Gordon, unfortunately failed through the death of the fish in transit.

The work of the Hatchery and distribution of fish must be considered, at the present time, the most important of the operations under control of the Commissioners,—calling for constant attention and care, and requiring skilled supervision. Tasmania has the honour of having taken the lead in fish culture, and the presence of *Salmonidæ* in her lakes and rivers points to the success which has attended her exertions. The larger Colonies still look to Tasmania for advice and help in their efforts to follow her example in fish acclimatisation; and at a time when efforts are being made to advertise our Island Home, and induce tourists to visit our shores, the Hatchery upon the Plenty, generally known as the "Salmon Ponds," not only serves the purpose of one of our most attractive show-places—it is estimated from the Attendance Book that fully 70 per cent. of our annual visitors inspect the Ponds whilst in Tasmania—but, at a very small cost to the country, is in a very practical way helping to advertise the Colony abroad, and answer the question, "How to make our

rivers and lakes more attractive?" In connection with above, as it is sometimes interesting to read what is written about us by our neighbours, I insert a copy of a letter which appeared in a late issue of the Melbourne *Argus*, referring to some fishing in our Great Lake during the past season:—

#### TROUT IN TASMANIA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE ARGUS.

SIR,—The Victorian angler who can call a week or so his own is generally in the greatest difficulty to know where he can get any fish, as try where he will the supply appears to have given out. It may interest many of your readers to learn that at the Great Lake in Tasmania, and within comparatively easy distance of Melbourne, there is to be had between the 1st of September and the 30th April just the finest trout-fishing in the world. From a Tasmanian paper I extract accounts of two fishing trips made to the lake. The former was made on 30th March last by a party of four sportsmen—Drs. Jermyn and Maddox, and Messrs. T. Carr and Russell Ritchie. The first few days after reaching the lake were described as wet and cold, but during the remainder of their holiday the party were favoured with the most propitious weather, and the sport was excellent. The total number of brown trout caught was 53, and the weight 476½lb., or an average of a trifle over 9lb. The heaviest fish turned the scale at 17¾lb., and there were several 17-pounders. Four weighed 16 lb. and 17 over 10 lb. On April 21 a second party, consisting of Dr. Hallowes and Messrs. R. F. Irvine, J. Cathcart, and R. Headlam visited the lake. Mr. Irvine landed fish weighing in pounds as follows:—8, 8, 5, 9½, 8½, 7, 7, 7, and 18½; Dr. Hallowes, 7, 7, 7, 9½, 10, 7, 5½, 15½. The other two gentlemen, who spent most of their time duck shooting, did not do quite so well. The total caught was 271 lb. of fish. I have been unable to obtain complete details as to the mode of fishing adopted, but learn that wading out into the lake is usually practised, and that the fish take the bait best in rough weather. Why boats are not used I cannot conjecture. The bait is the phantom minnow. The best route is *via* Tunbridge, on the Launceston-Hobart railway line, from which township Mr. Harris, of the *Victoria Inn*, will drive a party of four to the lake and back for £10. Going to the lake it is usual to stop the night *en route* at Interlaken, where there is excellent accommodation, and to proceed next day to the Great Lake. Here comfortable quarters may be obtained at the local constable's for 6s. a day. I have myself been at the Great Lake, but at the northern end, a locality reached only after immense exertion, and with no success to reward the effort. The explanation of the splendid sport obtainable at the southern end is probably that here the Shannon—a full-grown river—debouches from the lake, and the fish are doubtless concentrated in the direction of the outlet.

The Tasmanians are to be complimented upon their determined and successful efforts at fish acclimatisation—efforts greatly in contrast with our wretched attempts in Victoria.—Yours, &c.,

St. Kilda, May 15.

WILLIAM CROOKE.

The catches referred to were in no way phenomenal in comparison with fish taken by other parties at the same spot and elsewhere during last season; but the above report having appeared in our newspapers, the attention of outsiders was immediately attracted, as shown by the above letter; and I notice that the *Field* and other English sporting papers have considered the above facts sufficiently important to draw the attention of their readers to the fishing obtainable in Tasmania. Year by year, in addition to being enabled to spare surplus Ova for sale to Acclimatising Societies in the other Colonies, thousands of young fish are hatched and distributed throughout the different accessible lakes and rivers of the Colony,—thus neutralising to some extent the ravages of cormorants and other foes in waters where the fish have already a hold, while gradually stocking new places further afield. The specimens of acclimatised *Salmonidæ* exhibited in the Hobart and Launceston Museums are not equalled by any similar exhibits in the Museums of any other Australasian Colony; and the eleven specimens, averaging 18 lbs. weight—the largest turning the scale at 23 lbs.—taken from one of our lakes, and now on view in the Tasmanian Court of the Imperial Institute, cannot fail to attract much attention from any persons interested in these Colonies.

As in the near future our Lake Country is certain to become a well-patronised tourist route, I think I cannot do better than conclude this Report by now placing on record the state of fish acclimatisation in that part of the Island, commencing at Lakes Sorell and Crescent, where there is splendid accommodation for visitors. Trout are established in Lake Crescent, and quantities of *fontinalis* and Loch Leven Trout are annually being liberated in Lake Sorell. Next in order is Wood's Lake, where *fontinalis* have been placed, and Arthur's Lakes will have attention during the coming season. The Great Lake is next in line, and has already been referred to in this Report sufficiently to show that acclimatisation of *Salmonidæ* has there been a splendid success. Next to the Great Lake are the fine bodies of water known as the Nineteen Lagoons; and reports reach us that the Trout have worked up from the River Ouse, and are now firmly established in all these lakes. Lake Echo has had *fontinalis* liberated in its waters; and as the River Dee, which runs from this Lake, is well-stocked with Brown Trout, these fish must have ere this found their way in. Lake St. Clair is the terminus of any tourist route, and has been reported as "teeming with trout;" but we have no recent reports of any catches there, as the want of present facilities of transit and accommodation prevent sportsmen and others from going so far afield. This difficulty, however, is for the present assisting acclimatisation by allowing the fish to quietly accumulate there undisturbed.

I have the honor to be,  
Sir,

Your obedient Servant,

MATTHEW SEAL, *Chairman Commissioners*  
*of Fisheries.*

*The Hon. the Chief Secretary, Hobart.*