

(No. 32.)



1879.

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T A S M A N I A.

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL.

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SALMON COMMISSIONERS:

REPORT FOR 1878.

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Laid upon the Table by Mr. Crowther, and ordered by the Council to be printed,  
September 9, 1879.



To His Excellency FREDERICK ALOYSIUS WELD, Esquire, Companion of the Most Distinguished Order of Saint Michael and Saint George, Governor and Commander-in-Chief in and over the Island of Tasmania and its Dependencies.

MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY.

THE Salmon Commissioners have the pleasure of reporting that the different species of *Salmonidæ* in the various rivers in which they have become acclimatised continue to increase in a most satisfactory manner.

The Commissioners regret to have to express their belief that poaching is still extensively practised: one case was detected during the year, and the offenders were prosecuted and convicted.

During the last four years, towards the end of September or early in October, Salmon smolts have been captured in a water-race leading to the Ponds from the River Plenty, evidently on their way to the Derwent. The fish were beautifully bright and well formed, and specimens have each year been placed in the Museum for public inspection. The Commissioners consider the presence of these smolts in the Plenty conclusive evidence that the parent fish go up that river to deposit their ova; and as many thousands of ova are annually taken from the Plenty for the purpose of distribution throughout the Colony and for sale to other Colonies, it is now more than probable that, in addition to the Brown Trout, both the Salmon and Salmon Trout have become well established in many and widely separate localities in this Colony, and in the neighbouring continent.

Throughout the late fishing season the waters of the Upper Derwent and the Plenty were literally swarming with *Salmonidæ*, many of which were captured for the purpose of selecting good specimens for the Sydney Exhibition; the largest fish taken on these occasions being a Brown Trout weighing sixteen pounds. As to this fish it now appears to be an established fact that it attains to a larger average size here than in English waters, very many having been captured weighing from ten to twenty pounds.

In February, 1878, a fine fish weighing six pounds was caught about two miles below Hobart Town, and presented so many characteristics of the true Salmon that the head was transmitted to Professor M'Coy for examination. The following is the reply of the learned Professor:—

I have just received the head of the fish caught on Friday, 8th of February, 1878, in the Derwent, Tasmania, in net, and have the pleasure of informing you that it is a well-marked true Salmon (*Salmo salar*). All the bones of the head and pieces of the gill-covers present the characteristic proportions distinguishing the Salmon from the other migratory *Salmonoids* which I referred to on a former occasion; in addition to which I desire to note in your specimen that the preoperculum shows the very constant peculiarity characteristic of the true Salmon, of having its lower limb very long, and making a distinct (though blunted) angle with the vertical posterior margin. The nearly semicircular posterior margin of the gill-cover, composed of the outer edges of the operculum, suboperculum, and introperculum, is well marked, as in all true Salmon, and contrasts strongly with the more rectilinear angulated form in the other species of migratory *Salmonoids*. The very oblique upward and backward extension of the lower margin of the operculum, making its greatest antero-posterior dimension nearly in the middle of its vertical dimension, is a good distinction of the Salmon from the allied species, well seen in the head you sent me. It also presents the large re-entering angle between the lower end of the operculum and its junction with the preoperculum, showing a higher exposure of the sub-operculum than in any species except the Salmon, and also shows the very oblique upward and backward direction of the sub-operculum characteristic of the Salmon, and contrasting strongly with the sea Trout and other allied species. If you choose to publish this note I have no objection.

As some doubts—in spite of all evidence to the contrary—are occasionally expressed as to the acclimatisation of the *Salmo salar*, the above decided opinion by such an authority as Professor M'Coy must command general satisfaction, and go far to extinguish any scepticism which may still exist.

We may add that a finer specimen of Salmon than that reported upon by Professor M'Coy has recently been captured (by the rod) near New Norfolk, and forwarded to the International Exhibition at Sydney.

Since our last report a new lease of the Ponds has been executed, and occupation has been secured to the Colony for a further term of nine years from the 1st January, 1876, at a slightly increased rental.

Appended will be found a Return showing the distribution of Ova and Fry during the past year.

The cost to the Colony of the Salmon Ponds during 1878 was £308 10s., but £215 of this sum was repaid to the Treasury as receipts for sale of Ova and Trout Licences. The account stands thus:—

	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
Expenditure during 1878 .....	..	..	..	308	10	0
Receipts—Sale of Ova .....	86	0	0			
Trout Licences, Season 1878-79 .....	129	0	0			
				<u>215</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
Balance .....				£93	10	0

It will thus be seen that the *actual* cost of the Establishment was only £93 10s.; but if the value of Fry produced and distributed throughout the Colony be considered, the Ponds may really be said to be self-supporting, as every new stream supplied with fish means at no distant date an increased revenue from licences. The licence fee has been reduced from 20s. to 10s., and a special effort is being made to secure the co-operation of the Municipal Police in the suppression of illegal fishing. If this suppression could be accomplished, it is evident that still greater attractions would be afforded to anglers both from this and the neighbouring Colonies, with a proportionate increase to the Revenue in many ways.

Four new Commissioners have been appointed since last report; viz., the Hon. W. A. B. Gellibrand, the Hon. J. W. Agnew, Messrs. A. G. Webster, and H. Weedon.

The Commissioners regret that it is their painful duty to record the death of three of the oldest of their number,—Mr. Allport, Captain Langdon, and the Hon. Sir Robert Officer.

By the death of Mr. Allport the Commission has sustained a most serious loss. His varied knowledge of Natural History, his great practical experience in Pisciculture, and the untiring energy, zeal, and ability with which, from its very inception, he addressed himself to the great, and then novel, experiment of introducing fish by means of their ova from Europe, are too well known to require comment.

Captain Langdon at a former period of his life proved himself, on many occasions, to be an active and practical supporter of the cause of acclimatisation.

The Honorable Sir Robert Officer was Chairman of the Commission from its first appointment. His enthusiasm in the cause of the Salmon experiment was proverbial, and much of its success (of which he was satisfied long before belief in it became so general as at present) was due to his vigilance and unceasing supervision. The open hospitality and courteous attention which it was his pleasure at all times to bestow on numerous visitors from the Colonies and elsewhere have been too generally appreciated to be soon forgotten.

In conclusion, we desire to record our opinion that the present boundary of the Derwent within which seining is prohibited should not be altered. To quote from a high authority (Judge Francis) in last year's Report,—“The whole history of our English Salmon Fisheries shows that the working fishermen require to be protected against themselves. They have not the knowledge or the self-denial which should withhold them from sacrificing the whole future of their trade to a trifling increase of their immediate profits.”

The good effect of the closure of the river was proved recently in an attempt which was made under our authority to secure specimens of Salmon, and which resulted in the capture of an enormous and extraordinary quantity of indigenous fish.

Proof was thus afforded that the closed portion of the river has become a nursery, not only for the *Salmonidae* but for our native fish. The fishermen are thus in a better position than if the river was open, as vast numbers of the fish are certain to push out of the protected waters and thus keep up a good and permanent supply for the market.

We venture to assert, if the river were now thrown open the result would be most disastrous; in the course of a few years the fish would again become as scarce as ever, and the fisherman would have to go much farther afield to practise his calling under far greater difficulties than at present.

ROB. CAR READ, *Chairman*.  
 THOS. GIBLIN.  
 MATTHEW SEAL.  
 JOHN BUCKLAND.  
 J. W. AGNEW.  
 HENRY BUTLER.  
 W. A. B. JAMIESON.  
 ALEX. GEO. WEBSTER.  
 H. WEEDON.  
 W. A. B. GELLIBRAND.

8th September, 1879.

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*RETURN of the Distribution of Ova and Fry from the Breeding Ponds, River Plenty, during the Year 1878.*

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OVA.

*Brown Trout.*

New South Wales .....	500
Victoria .....	8000
Streams in the vicinity of Lake St. Clair, Tasmania.....	2000

FRY.

*Brown Trout.*

River Mersey .....	500
River Plenty .....	1500
Ben Lomond Rivulet.....	300
Macquarie River .....	500
Meander River .....	500
Launceston .....	1000
Coal River .....	1950
Lisdillon .....	900
Huon .....	250
Prossers .....	450

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PHILIP S. SEAGER, *Secretary to Commissioners.*