



WELCOME TO THE HOCKEN

Friends of the Hocken Collections

BULLETIN NUMBER 37: September 2001

A pretty kettle of fish

Few early settlers' diaries mention freshwater fishing in New Zealand. Fishing was undertaken essentially for food, the species caught including grayling and smelt. James Hector, in the notes he contributed to F.W.Hutton's *Fishes of New Zealand* (Wellington, 1872; 133p), records that neither would rise to a fly, but could be caught with a worm.

A NGLING for trout in New Zealand waters can be dated to the formation of acclimatisation societies in the south of the country: Otago in 1864, followed by Southland in 1867. The Otago Acclimatisation Society first imported brown trout ova from Tasmania in 1868 and released the resulting fry into the Waitati Stream the following year. It also imported quinnat salmon ova, but the experiment was unsuccessful.

In 1867, the Otago Provincial Government constructed the first salmon hatchery in New Zealand, at the confluence of the Waiwera Stream and Clutha River — not with the object of providing sporting fish, but of establishing a salmon-preserving industry. Two years later the experiment was transferred to Southland, but neither of these attempts was successful and it was not until 1901, when the central government established a hatchery at Hakataramea, on a tributary of the Waitaki River, that they

became acclimatised. Interestingly, the object here was again the establishment of a canning industry.

The first open season to be declared took in the three-month period from December 1874 to the end of February 1875, and at 4am on December 1, 1874, when fishing the Water of Leith, A.C.Begg was credited with being the first person in New Zealand to take a trout legally on rod and line. The Tapanui Angling Club, formed in 1880, was the first in New Zealand, followed the next year by the Otago Anglers' Association.

At first, tackle was obtained direct from Melbourne or England, but in 1875 the well-known book dealer Joseph Braithwaite, situated in Dunedin's Arcade, was advertising tackle for sale. Other merchants followed his example, including Alex. Thompson & Sons who had commenced business as sailmakers and ships' chandlers, and A.&W.McCarthy, better known then as gunsmiths and



'When the important thing was the number and weight of fish caught...' A day's catch from the Rangitata River. (K.L.McKay Collection, Hocken Library)

bellhangers. By the turn of the century specialised sports goods retailers had begun to emerge, the Otago Sports Depot being among the earliest.

The literature

One of the first angling books with New Zealand content is William Senior's *Travel and Trout in the Antipodes; An Angler's Sketches in Tasmania & New Zealand* (Chatto & Windus, London, 1880; 315p). Travelling from Auckland to Dunedin, Senior describes various angling locations, including 'a celebrated stud farm for trout in the Shag Valley', but the gem for southern fishermen is the description of six days' fishing at Lee Stream. Arthur Nicols' *The Acclimatisation of the Salmonidae at the Antipodes, its History and Results* (Sampson Low, London, 1882; 238p) details the early experiments and failures in shipping ova.

The first book written and published in New Zealand came ten years later — William H. Spackman's *Trout in New Zealand: Where to Go and How to Catch Them* (Govt. Printer, 1892; 99p), expanding Senior's work and providing a very comprehensive cover of South Island waters. It details for the first time the major fishing waters of the South Island, describing the Mataura River as 'the best fly-fishing river in Otago or Southland'.

Then came Capt. G.D. Hamilton's classic *Trout Fishing and Sport in Maoriland* (Govt. Printer, 1904; 428p), the vade-mecum of all guide books, complete with railway timetables, a detailed list of over 1000 fishing locations, and a useful description of tackle and fishing methods in vogue at the time.

Modern books of the same type include *Trout Fishing in Southland* (Southland Acclimatisation Society, 1962; 68p). Developed out of *Trout and Salmon Fishing in Southland* (Southland Anglers Club, 1929; 128p) and greatly improved, it is a model of what a guide-book should be, not only listing significant Southland fishing sites, but detailing access routes and the location of huts administered by the society. A later edition came out in 1994. Brian Turner, more usually known for his poetry, edited a similar *Guide to Trout Fishing in Otago* (Otago Acclimatisation Society, 1984; 102p), revised twice since.

General angling books

Zane Grey, an American angler who was invited by the Government to fish in this country and whose book *Tales of the Angler's Eldorado, New Zealand* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1926; 313p) was largely responsible for placing New Zealand on the world's big-game fishing map, also included a chapter about rainbow trout fishing on the Tongariro River. Written at a time when the most important thing was the number and weight of fish caught, it aptly illustrates the overkill methods and tackle formerly employed.

Written by T.E. Donne, former general manager of the Department of Tourist and Health Resorts, to enhance New Zealand as an angling destination, *Rod Fishing in New Zealand Waters* (Seeley Service, London, 1927; 246p) covers subjects ranging from trout diseases to accommodation and camping. Of particular interest are the notes on the introduction of trout and salmon ova into Tasmania, the parent stock of the Otago liberations.

Remembered more for such mountaineering works as *With Axe and Rope in the New Zealand Alps*, George E. Mannering's *Eighty Years in New Zealand, Embracing Fifty Years of NZ Fishing* (Simpson & Williams, Christchurch, 1943; 255p) is a trip down memory lane. Recalling the magical experiences of a pioneer fisherman from 1892 to 1942, it contains some of the earliest writing on New Zealand salmon fishing.

The 1950s heralded a marked increase in the number and quality of angling books published. *Fly Fishing in New Zealand* by George Ferris (Heinemann, Melbourne, 1954; 242p) was billed as a 'comprehensive book covering each phase of the sport of fly fishing in every stream and waterway of the Dominion'. Still as fresh as the day it was written, Ferris's text advocates that dry-fly fishing should be practised by all fly fishermen, not merely the elite.

The revised edition of Ferris (1972) discussed nymph fishing, long practised on English waters, but only then becoming increasingly common in New Zealand. Two years later came Tony Orman's *Trout with Nymph* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1974; 157p; 1983, 172p), the first New Zealand book devoted entirely to that subject, and credited with creating an upsurge in nymphing. Orman's *Trout on a Nymph* (Halcyon Press, Auckland; 160p) followed in 1991.

Freshwater Admiral: Fishing the Tongariro River and Lake Taupo (Reed, Wellington, 1960; 255p), by Vice-Admiral Harold Hickling, contains an interesting chapter on cooking, smoking and eating the catch. Hickling recommends that as soon as a fish is killed it should be bled in the water where it was caught, because 'the blood or the smell of it attracts fish and arouses their predatory instincts'.

The New Zealand fishing literature is far too large to list here in full. The University Library's on-line catalogue runs to 1324 entries under Fishing and another 37 under Angling, with 223 mainly scientific papers under Freshwater Fisheries, and further titles under NZ Tourist Publicity Dept and NZ Marine Dept. Most of these relate to New Zealand and most of those will be found in the Hocken.

These few titles, therefore, are only a tiny selection: Byrne, Jack. *Salmon Country* (Collins, 1980; 158p), the first NZ book devoted to the subject, presents a complete picture from reading the water to the selection of tackle. Galbreath, R.A. *Working for Wildlife, a History of the NZ*

Wildlife Service (Bridget Williams, Wellington, 1993; 253p) is self-explanatory.

Holden, Philip. *The Golden Years of Fishing in NZ* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1984; 291p) assembles fishing experiences culled from the files of the *New Zealand Illustrated*, *Auckland Weekly News*, *Fishing & Shooting Gazette*, and various old books.

McDowall, R.M. *Gamekeepers to the Nation, New Zealand's Acclimatisation Societies 1861–1990* (Canterbury U.Press, 1994; 508p) is a detailed account. A scientist with the National Institute of Water and Atmosphere, McDowall has published a large number of papers, recorded in *A Listing of Ministry Publications on Freshwater Fish and Fisheries* (Freshwater Fisheries Report No.16, 1982), and also in D.Bassett, *A Bibliography of the Freshwater Fishes of NZ* (National Library Service, 1961).

Parsons, John. *Pye's Kingdom of Huka Lodge* (Acacia Bay Books, 1998; 135p) records the life of Allan Pye, proprietor of one of the country's earliest and best-known fishing lodges. It also explains the origin and tying of Pye's Sedge (an imitation of the stick caddis, *Triplectides obsolata*) and Pye's Nymph.

Stewart, Douglas. *The Seven Rivers* (Whitcombe & Tombs, 1966; 218p), about angling adventures on the streams that flow from Mt Taranaki.

In lighter vein are E.J.Webber's *You Should Have Been Here on Thursday* (Reed, 1961; 143p) and its sequel, *Try Again Friday* (Reed, 1965; 164p). Fiction is represented by Bob Jones's light-hearted snub at authority, *The Permit* (Collins, 1984; 151p)

General books with angling content

The range is again exceptionally wide, from anecdotes about salmon fishing in F.T.Bullen's *Idylls of the Sea and Other Marine Sketches* (Grant Richards, 1899; 266p) to brief descriptions of Southland angling in Sir Harry Lauder's *Roamin' in the Gloamin'* (Hutchinson, London, 287p), and again it's impossible to list them all. Here are just a few miscellaneous examples:

Anderson, J. & Beck, J. *Waipahi and District, the Hands of Time* (Waipahi School Centennial Committee, 1979; 160p), for the history of the Waipahi Angling Club.

Blair, E.W. & Kerse, E. *On the Slopes of Signal Hill, Aspects of Opoho's History as Seen Through its Streets & Buildings* (Otago Heritage Books, 1988; 60p), for the history of the Otago Acclimatisation Society's Opoho hatchery.

Mackenzie, Florence. *The Sparkling Waters of Whakatipua* (Reed, 1947; 157p), on early lake fishing.

Muir, D.C.W. ed. *Mataura, City of the Falls* (Mataura Historical Society, 1991; 504p), for the history of the

Mataura Angling Club.

Reid, R.C. *Rambles on the Golden Coast of the South Island, NZ* (Colonial Printing & Publishing Co., London, 1884; 175p) describes fishing for grayling, 'a sport akin to roach fishing'.

Sharpe, Rupert. *Fiordland Muster* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1966; 128p), on fishing in remote Fiordland.

Technical and scientific

In 1892, the noted amateur entomologist G.V.Hudson completed his *An Elementary Manual of NZ Entomology, being an Introduction to the Study of our Native Insects* (West Newman, London, 1892; 128p), followed by *New Zealand Neuroptera, including Notes on their Relationship to Angling* (West Newman, London, 1904; 102p). Both works, with their fine coloured engravings, are keenly sought by fly-tying enthusiasts.

More modern books in this field include: Norman Marsh, *Trout Stream Insects of NZ, How to Imitate and Use Them* (Millwood Press, Auckland, 1983; 224p) and *Norman Marsh's Flybox* (Halcyon Press, Auckland, 1996; 167p); A.Chapman & M.K.Lewis, *An Introduction to the*



Sir Harry Lauder at Te Anau during his visit in the 1920s. (F.G.Leckie)

Freshwater Crustacea of NZ (Collins, Auckland, 1976; 261p); Keith Draper, *Trout Flies in NZ* (Reed, 1971; 182p) and *NZ Trout Flies, Traditional & Modern* (Reed, 1997; 148p), both of which list the known NZ fly patterns, giving their tyings and, where known, their origins.

One of the many technical publications issued by the Marine Department, Derisley F.Hobbs' *Trout Fisheries in NZ: their Development & Management* (Fisheries Bulletin No.9, 1948; 175p), looks at the ecology and management of trout streams. The case for the continuing destruction of the black shag, long practised by acclimatisation societies, was presented by H.G.Williams in *The Shag Menace, a Book for Anglers* (Dunedin, 1945; 94p). Recording the examination of the stomach contents of 2,883 birds, he argues that the toll taken of trout resources justified the elimination of shags to 'improve angling conditions in New Zealand'.

Other interesting scientific papers can be found in the *Transactions and Proceedings of the NZ Institute*, ranging in subject matter from F.W.Hutton's *Notes on a Sea Trout caught in Otago Harbour* (Vol.11) to W.Arthur's *History of Fish Culture in NZ* (Vol.14).

Archives

Griffiths, G.J.: Papers include material on salmon fishing in the Otago Harbour and commercial salmon farming in South Otago.

Hefford, A.E.: Papers and field books, 1913–1948.

Hefford was Chief Inspector of Fisheries, and his indexed field books contain much on acclimatised fish. He wrote the foreword to H.G.Williams' *The Shag Menace*.

Otago Acclimatisation Society records: A large holding, containing minute books 1864–1935; annual reports, 1865–1950; various committee reports, etc.

Otago Angling Association: Competition schedules, 1928–36.

Thomson, George M.: Papers and field books. Thomson, one of Otago's most noted naturalists and the originator of the fish hatchery at Portobello, was an MP and Legislative Councillor, and a former president of the Otago Acclimatisation Society.

Official papers and publications

Otago Provincial Government: The most useful source covering the period 1853–76 are the 95 reels of micro-film constituting General Inward Correspondence to the Superintendent (series O.P.7). The relevant material

mainly concerns acclimatisation, and it can be accessed through the register and index in series O.P.9

Central Government: The *Appendices to the Journals of the House of Representatives* and the *Journals of the Legislative Council* both contain quite an amount of relevant material, all indexed. In addition, the pre-1900 material is recorded in A.Hamilton's *A List of Papers on NZ Fishes and Fishing*.

New Zealand Institute: The *Transactions* contain several scientific papers relevant to angling. The Hocken holds an index to Vols 1–51, with an index of authors, 1869–1971.

Thesis

One particularly worth nothing is: J.F.Swan, 'A Short History of the Acclimatisation Society of Otago', Otago University, 1962.

Newspapers and periodicals

All main-centre newspapers, many provincial papers and weeklies such as the *Auckland Weekly News* have carried extremely popular angling columns over the years, the *Otago Witness* commencing its regular weekly column in October 1886.

The *NZ Fishing & Shooting Gazette*, 1927–1956, the first periodical in the country devoted to those subjects, contains information unavailable anywhere else; the Hocken holds a broken run — as it also does of the *NZ Outdoor Magazine*, 1937–1983.

Periodicals in a more specialist sense include annual reports of the Otago and Waimate Acclimatisation Societies.

Photographs

The bound volumes of *Otago Witness* illustrations (1899–1928), for which the Hocken holds a limited index, and the *Auckland Weekly News* (1900–1942) both carried photographs of angling subjects with reasonable frequency.

The K.L.McKay Collection contains a small but delightful selection of early 20th century fly-fishing photographs.

*

Written for the Friends of the Hocken Collections, PO Box 6336, Dunedin, by Frank Leckie; edited by George Griffiths; designed by Gary Blackman.