

# NOTES

## Fishes Taken in Wellington Harbour

THIS RECORD of the fishes of Wellington Harbour is the result of a series of notes collected at intervals during a period of over 20 years. My first paper (*New Zeal. Jour. Sci. and Technol.* 1(5): 268-271, 1918) supplies a record of the edible fishes of Wellington; and to this, additions have been made in subsequent papers. This summary of fish fauna deals exclusively with fishes recorded from the harbour, and does not by any means claim to be a complete record; for we doubtless have many aquatic visitors who do not remain for any length of time.

The climate of Wellington is very variable; but the temperature of the harbour water remains relatively constant unless the summer is consistently warm, when all sorts of northern species such as John Dory, *Zeus faber*, and northern mullet, *Mugil cephalus*, invade our waters. It also is well to remember that we are dealing with shoals of fishes which are anything but consistent in their appearance and are at the mercy of a variable and ever-changing food supply, so that species recorded in a given year may not be seen again for a comparatively long period. The residual fish fauna of the harbour is, I think, small. Herring, *Agonostomus forsteri*, are the most common species, and next to these the spotties, *Pseudolabrus celidotus*, which are found in abundance in many localities. Shoals of larger fishes, notably kahawai, *Arripis trutta*, and barracouta, *Thyrsites atun*, prey on these smaller fishes in the summer months.

It is probable that the relative abundance of fish life in the harbour is on the decrease. The traffic of large vessels at the wharves appears to have reduced the number of fishes in that area; and the fishing grounds off Seatoun and Worser Bay are either fished out or now partly deserted.

### 1. *Geotria australis* Gray. Lamprey.

In the "piharau stage" this lamprey lives in Wellington Harbour until it is well over 1 foot long, and then migrates up the Hutt River to spawn. Several specimens of a very beautiful

green-blue colour have been taken by the Petone fishermen off Somes Island and forwarded to the Dominion Museum for identification.

### 2. *Notorhynchus pectorosus* (Garman).

Seven-gilled Shark.

This species appears in the harbour at irregular intervals. It is probable that it enters only in pursuit of small fishes. Only two specimens have been examined. (Phillipps, *New Zeal. Dominion Mus. Rec.* 1(2): 5, 1946).

### 3. *Eulamia brachyurus* (Günther). Whaler.

This is a species that is rarely taken in the harbour. In the Dominion Museum there is a cast of a specimen a little over 9 feet long from off Somes Island.

### 4. *Raja nasuta* Muller and Henle. Skate.

Sometimes small skates are taken by fishermen off Rona Bay.

### 5. *Callorhynchus milii* Bory. Elephant Fish.

Some years ago a small elephant fish was taken off Rona Bay and sent to the Museum for identification. This species, so abundant in Otago Harbour, is almost unknown north of Cook Strait.

### 6. *Sardinops neopilchardus* (Steindachner).

Pilchard.

A note on the occurrence of this species in Wellington Harbour is given by me in *New Zeal. Jour. Sci. and Technol.* 7(3): 191, 1924. Shoals enter the harbour in the winter, about August, and are indicated by the diving of gannets.

### 7. *Gonorhynchus gonorynchus* (Linnaeus).

Sand Fish.

This species is sometimes taken off Rona Bay and specimens are occasionally forwarded to the Museum for identification. The sand fish may be quite common as it escapes the drag net by burrowing.

8. *Leptocephalus conger* (Linnaeus). Conger Eel.

The conger eel is not uncommon off Eastbourne in February.

9. *Hippocampus abdominalis* Lesson. Seahorse.

Several specimens have been taken close to Oriental Bay.

10. *Coelorrhynchus australis* (Richardson). Javelin Fish.

Occasional examples have been taken off Rona Bay and forwarded to the Museum.

11. *Macruronus novae-zelandiae* (Hector). Whiptail.

Occasionally, young are taken in the early summer months.

12. *Merluccius gayi* (Guichenot). Whiting.

Occasional examples have been taken in the harbour.

13. *Physiculus bachus* (Bloch and Schn.). Red Cod.

One or two small specimens have been reported, but the species is rare.

14. *Zeus faber* Linnaeus. John Dory.

Specimens are occasionally taken off Some Island in the summer months.

15. *Rhombosolea plebeia* (Richardson). Sand Flounder.

This species is taken off Seatoun and Rona Bay throughout most of the year.

16. *Rhombosolea leporina* Günther. Yellow-belly.

This flounder is caught with sand flounders, but never in any quantity.

17. *Peltorhampus novae-zeelandiae* Günther. Sole.

This species is taken in small numbers off Rona Bay.

18. *Pelotretus flavilatus* Waite. Lemon Sole.

Small numbers are taken off Rona Bay.

19. *Agonostomus forsteri* (Cuv. and Val.) Yellow-eyed Mullet.

This mullet is popularly called "herring"; and in North Auckland it is called "sprat." Young are common throughout the year in both brackish and salt water.

20. *Mugil cephalus* Linnaeus. Northern Mullet.

Small numbers are taken at Rona Bay during periods of warm weather.

21. *Seriotelella brama* (Günther). Warehou.

Warehou are taken just inside the harbour "Heads" in the spring months.

22. *Polyprion oxygeneios* (Bloch and Schn.). Hapuku or Groper.

Mr. J. Patterson informs me that he saw small groper taken off Wellington wharves in the 1890's. They now are rare inside the harbour entrance.

23. *Longirostrum platessa* (Cuv. and Val.). Trevally.

The trevally is taken during summer in several parts of the harbour, but mostly near the entrance.

24. *Trachurus novae-zelandiae* Richardson. Horse Mackerel.

This species is fairly common in warm weather but disappears during winter. Mr. J. Patterson informs us that in the 1890's this was a common species around Wellington wharves.

25. *Seriola lalandi* Cuv. and Val. Kingfish.

The kingfish apparently follows pilchards and other fishes into the harbour. It is caught by line fishermen off Kaiwarra and Ngahauranga, and taken by Petone fishermen off Some Island. It is a difficult fish to catch, and small specimens are the rule.

26. *Arripis trutta* (Forster). Kahawai.

In the summer months this species is not uncommon in the harbour, where with kingfish it follows shoals of smaller fishes.

27. *Pagrosomus auratus* (Forster). Snapper.

At intervals throughout part of the year snapper may be taken in southern parts of the harbour.

28. *Scorpius violaceus* (Hutton). Maomao.

The first maomao described was taken in Wellington Harbour (Hutton, *New Zeal. Inst.*,

*Trans. and Proc.* 5: 261, 1873). On March 9, 1941, Mr. B. P. R. Phillipps, fishing at Kaiwarra, caught the second reported specimen. This was a small maomao, 147 mm. long, and 60 mm. high at the anal origin. There were traces of blue on the body and red along the lateral line. The radial formula is D.10+28; A.3+28; V.1+5. It is quite possible that this species is a great deal more common in Wellington Harbour than is indicated by the paucity of reported specimens.

29. *Dactylopagrus macropterus* (Forster). Tarakihi.

This species sometimes is taken in southern portions of the harbour.

30. *Latridopsis ciliaris* (Forster). Moki.

Moki sometimes are caught in the harbour but are said to be not nearly so common as they were 40 years ago.

31. *Pseudolabrus celidotus* (Forster). Spotty.

The spotty is more or less common in rocky localities around the edge of the harbour.

32. *Parapercis colias* (Forster). Blue Cod.

Small numbers are taken by amateur fishermen in certain years only. About January, 1946, a small example (about 1 foot long) was taken off Wellington wharves by Mr. B. P. R. Phillipps, the only specimen I have seen taken in recent years.

33. *Thyrsites atun* (Euphrasen). Barracouta.

Formerly, the barracouta was common in the harbour, but is not fished for now to any extent.

34. *Jordanidia solandri* (Cuv. and Val.). Hake or Southern Kingfish.

The hake is taken during February and sometimes in March, but is not common.

35. *Acanthoclinus quadridactylus* (Bloch and Schn.). Taumaka.

This species is rare in the harbour. Some years ago Mr. W. O. S. Phillipps caught a large specimen when line-fishing at Pipitea Point.

36. *Hemerocoetes waitei* Regan.

This species has occasionally been taken in drag nets in the vicinity of Eastbourne.

37. *Tripterygion varium* (Forster). Cock-a-bully.

A type which eventually may prove to be new has D.7+23+15; C.2+11+2; A.29; P.19 V.2; and 30 raised scales in the lateral line. However, much comparative material on this species is required before we can determine the limits of its variation.

38. *Congiopodus leucopacilus* (Richardson) Pig Fish.

Occasional small examples have been sent into the Museum from Rona Bay fishermen.

39. *Chelidonichthys kumu* (Lesson and Garnot). Red Gurnard.

Small numbers were taken off Seatoun and Rona Bay.

40. *Diplocrepis puniceus* (Richardson) Sucker.

This species has been recorded at Seatoun by Dr. W. R. B. Oliver.

41. *Trachelochismus littoreus* (Forster).

This is another species recorded at Seatoun by Dr. Oliver.

42. *Cantherines scaber* (Forster). Leather Jacket.

The common leather jacket occasionally is taken in the harbour, small specimens arriving at the Museum for examination every few years.—*W. J. Phillipps, Dominion Museum, Wellington, New Zealand.*