

British Columbia Fisheries.

Inspector of Fisheries McNab, in an interview with the Victoria Colonist representative, has estimated the total salmon pack of the Fraser and Northern rivers of British Columbia at between 500,000 and 600,000 cases. The Northern pack can be calculated very closely as, with two or three exceptions, the official returns are in; but the official returns of the Fraser river are not yet to hand, and till they are the estimate of the canners themselves must be taken as rather under than over the mark, as the experience of other years has proven. It is therefore quite probable that when the cohort season is closed the pack will reach somewhat over 600,000. The Northern pack in detail is as follows:

SKEENA RIVER.

	No. of Cases.
Northern Pacific Canning Co.	10,000
Anglo British Columbian	12,000
Royal Canadian Packing Co.	10,800
Balmoral Canning Co.	12,000
Skeena Packing Co.	11,000
Windsor Canning Co.	10,000
Inverness Cannery	11,120
Standard Packing Co.	10,500
Carlisle Canning Co.	18,600
Total	101,000

RIVERS INLET.

Good Hope Cannery	30,000
Brunswick Cannery Co.	17,500
Wannuck Packing Co.	20,400
Victoria Cannery	18,975
Rivers Inlet Cannery	26,100
Total	108,275

Alert Bay Canning Co.	2,555
Lower Inlet Canning Co. (estimate)	10,000
Namu Harbor Canning Co. (estimated)	4,000
West Coast—Klayoquot Sound Co. (estimated)	4,000
Naas River (estimated)	20,000

This makes a grand total for the Northern canneries of 249,850 cases. Mr. McNab's estimate of the Fraser pack is 350,000 cases or over. This brings the total conservative estimated pack of British Columbia up to 549,850. To satisfactorily compare this year's pack with the last three years it is necessary to separate the Fraser river from the Northern pack, and it will be seen that while the Fraser pack has been diminishing the Northern pack has been increasing, and it is the Northern pack that makes this year off the unexpected big year:

	Cases.
1898 { Northern pack	112,685
{ Fraser river	557,570
Total	670,255
1894 { Northern pack	128,466
{ Fraser	363,366
Total	492,232
1895 { Northern pack	170,145
{ Fraser	432,920
Total	603,095
1896 { Northern pack	249,850
{ Fraser (estimated)	350,000
Total	599,850

Mr. McNab's theory of the splendid yearly increase in the Northern pack is that though the fish have always been there they are more difficult to net than in the Fraser owing to clear water, etc. In addition the number of fishermen is increasing each year, they are constantly spreading and fishing further outside. The inspector confesses

that he was very much surprised at the big catch this year owing to its being an historical off year. There has, it is true, been a decline in the Fraser catch since 1893, but nothing like the sliding scale of previous off years. The total pack four years previous to 1893 was 76,000 cases and four years previous to that 68,000. If the hatchery is the cause the more the merrier.

In this connection Mr. McNab has received word that there will be no appropriation made this year for hatcheries, but that next season two new hatcheries will be built—one on the Fraser and one up North. The present hatchery will accommodate 6,500,000 ova, but there might be trouble in getting so many, as this year the water in the small creeks has been very low, and he feared that the usual number of gravid salmon had not spawned in the old spawning grounds, although he could not answer for what had taken place earlier in the season. This fact might affect next season's run as stated, but he would not give an opinion. If the expected big yield 1897 did not come up to expectation this would no doubt be ventured as a reason. There are now thirty-five canneries on the Fraser and twenty up North—a total of fifty-five. Mr. McNab thought, as ten more were spoken of for the Fraser and several more for the North, that there was a possibility of over-doing things. It was easier to increase the number of canneries than the number of salmon. Some years there might not be enough salmon to go around.

THE STURGEON FISHERY.

Mr. McNab said there were not so many sturgeon caught now as three years ago, but that the present season was far better than last. The sturgeon industry only commenced three years ago and as there were no restrictions, an American company were having things all their own way in Westminster, and would have fished out the river with sinkers and floats to keep it off the bottom and hooks running a few inches apart the entire length of the line, so that the big fish could not get under the line without being pricked when they would flounder and be hooked at once in a dozen places. According to the new regulations nets with 12 inch mesh must be used, or, if lines are used, there can be but six hooks to each line four feet apart. There is a market for all the sturgeon caught at good prices, which has tempted many people into sturgeon fishing.

Railway Building in China.

The recent war with Japan seems to have done good to China, as that country is making more progress now. The struggle between British and French, or Russo-French, syndicates—competing for railway and other public works contracts in China—is being waged. The French, on the whole, says a London press telegram, "seem to be getting the best of it. The Pekin government, according to advices received in London and Paris, besides assenting to the construction of a narrow-gauge single line from Tangchow to the Tonquin frontier, where it will join the French line, have given the Russo-French syndicate contracts for a projected trunk line between Hankow and Canton. Nominally this big enterprise will be carried out by native contractors, but with French money and by French engineers. Ten civil and railway engineers have just left Paris for the east in connection with these contracts. On the British side contracts have been secured for railway extension from Tien Tsin to Pekin. German and United States private enterprises in the new development of China are not heard of."

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