

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ?

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FISH KILLED BY STORMS

During and after storms on the coast of New Zealand the shores are sometimes strewn with immense numbers of dead fish, including not only species normally found near the surface, but also a large proportion of deep-sea species. In one case, many years ago, a certain Captain Doyle reported sailing through miles of dead fish between Cape Palliser and Kaikoura.

The following account of such an occurrence appeared in the Wellington Evening Post of July 18, 1912: "A curious phenomenon was observed at Island Bay this morning. The beach was strewn with fish, some dead, some still alive— tons and tons of ling, hapuka, hake — every kind. One enterprising person collected a lorry load and brought it into town, and dozens secured smaller quantities, ranging from a barrow load to a 'string!'. Some thirty years ago the beach at Okarito, on the west coast of the South Island, was strewn for seventy miles with fish of all sorts and sizes, and an old resident of Wellington remembers several occasions on which the same thing happened at Lyall Bay."

Just how the fish are killed in these cases is not definitely known. One proposed explanation is that poisonous gases escape from the bottom of the sea; perhaps because of slight earth movements under the effects of varying atmospheric pressure.

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