



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

OFFICE OF THE COORDINATOR OF FISHERIES

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About 10,000,000 pounds of flavorful, low cost smelt will be added to the Nation's wartime food supply within the next few weeks, according to the Office of the Coordinator of Fisheries.

The current scarcity of meat and other seafood products, coupled with the usual Lenten demand, is expected to create a wider and more favorable market for smelt this year than ever before.

Great hordes of smelt will soon appear in the streams of Green Bay Region of Wisconsin and Michigan. Running almost always at night, the small silver fish will be taken by hundreds of smelt dippers working by the light of lanterns and wood fires.

Ordinarily the smelt runs begin shortly after ice begins to break, from March 17 to late April, depending upon the weather and the location. When the season is at its height great quantities will be on the market especially in the mid-west and even more distant areas.

The smelt runs cause a number of communities to take on a festival air, with great numbers of amateur fishermen lining the banks of small streams to scoop up the fish.

Smelt fishing in the Green Bay section and in other areas of the Great Lakes region where it occurs, only recently has become commercially important. The smelt is not a native of those waters. It was planted there in the early 1900's to serve as food for the land-locked salmon when efforts were being made to establish that species. The smelt, however, took readily to its new home and since 1935 it has been of increasing commercial importance. It is also fished in winter through the ice and from this comes the name "frost fish" by which it is known in some localities. The name "smelt", by which it is more generally known, comes from the old Anglo-Saxon word "smoelt" meaning bright or shining.

Small scoop nets are ordinarily used when fishing from the bank during the runs, but in larger streams some of the fishing is conducted with blanket or dip

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nets from boats or rafts anchored at spots where the smelt passes in greatest numbers. Where bridges are conveniently located, nets are lowered from them.

The run comes at different times in different streams. While the Green Bay area produces more smelt than any other region, these fish are found in other areas as widely scattered as the western end of Lake Superior and the eastern end of Lake Erie. They run in many streams of the lower peninsula of Michigan, from both Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, and from interior lakes. Perhaps 10,000,000 pounds is the normal harvest of these fish with about half coming from the Green Bay territory extending from Green Bay, Wisconsin, to the region of Rapid River, Michigan, a distance of more than 100 miles.

This year it is expected that a considerable quantity of smelt will go to the Army for use in mid-western camps.

