

Common smelt (*Retropinna retropinna*) in the Te Arawa lakes

The Te Arawa lakes are an integral part of the Te Arawa people. Traditionally, these lakes provided a bountiful array of mahinga kai (food). Smelt (a freshwater fish) live primarily in flowing waters but land-locked populations are present in the Te Arawa lakes. Smelt were probably introduced into the Te Arawa lakes in the 1920's and subsequently formed an important component of the harvest, particularly in the Ohau Channel between lakes Rotorua and Rotoiti. Predators, availability of food, and water and habitat quality are all factors that influence the distribution and abundance of smelt in the Te Arawa lakes. At least some of these factors can be managed through catchment and/or in-lake management that maintains good water quality.

