

Gun Club members and prominent duck shooters will be asked to complete a score card indicating the number of banded and other ducks bagged, the number crippled, and the locality in each case, and also whether more ducks were taken this season than last season.

Reports as received will be tabulated into an informative statistical statement and together with reports from Honorary Wardens and Departmental Inspectors provide a good measure of information on which to base reasonable regulations for conservation and rational taking.

All inspectors are requested to endeavour to sell the idea of sportsmen co-operating with the Department to obtain any information likely to secure these objects. It would assist also in mileage economy if inspectors would advise this office of any authentic reports on duck congregations in their areas where duck banding operations could be profitably pursued. Where desired cards will be made available to inspectors for distribution.

#### CORMORANT CONFERENCE

On August 13, in the Minister's office, members of the Fauna Protection Advisory Committee (Mr. A. J. Fraser, Chairman; Dr. D. L. Serventy and Mr. A. M. Douglas (deputising for Mr. Glauert)) met representatives of the Yacht Racing Association, comprising Mr. W. J. Lucas (Royal Perth), President; and Messrs. S. Craig (Rear-Commodore, Royal Freshwater Bay); W. Crommelin (Commodore, Claremont) and R. Tough (Claremont). Also in attendance were Messrs. H. B. Snugg, Acting Secretary of the Fauna Protection Advisory Committee, and J. Traynor, Fauna Warden.

The Minister opened the proceedings by referring to the deputation from the Association which had waited on him previously, and to the subsequent meeting he had had with the F.P.A.C. (vide July "Bulletin"). He also read one of many letters received from members of the public, and stated that for every person who wanted cormorants destroyed there were three who did not want them harmed. He said that the dissection of the three

shags by Dr. Serventy at the meeting on July 20 gave a fair indication that the types of shag dissected fed on fish of no commercial value. The bird which created the greatest nuisance as far as boats were concerned was the Little Pied Cormorant - the other types were more inclined to perch on the spit posts and dolphins in the river.

Mr. Craig said his Association would like to know whether digestion occurred in the shags' stomachs post mortem and what was the volume of food consumed. He said that regardless of what fish was found in the birds' stomachs, that could only be taken as an indication that the birds in question had fed on that type of fish that day, and that to obtain a proper picture of their feeding habits it would be necessary to carry out a year-round survey.

Dr. Serventy contended that the report of his survey in 1936 - a copy of which he would make available to Mr. Craig - answered the Association's points.

Mr. Lucas said that his Association's particular worry was the damage done to members' craft, and that they were not so interested in the fish the birds consumed. He found Dr. Serventy's earlier findings hard to believe, as he himself and many other yachtsmen had seen shags taking good size fish and cobbles. He would like to ask Dr. Serventy what useful function cormorants fulfilled in the scheme of things.

Dr. Serventy replied that without doubt shags did take some edible fish, but the main miscreant in this regard was the Large Black Cormorant, which was not protected. This species caused very little fouling of river craft. He said shags served a useful purpose in that they kept some sort of balance between useless fishes like gobies and gobbleguts and the edible species. If the small fishes of no economic value were permitted to build up indiscriminately they would consume the food upon which the more valuable species depended. He said a large body of public opinion favoured the protection of shags. He recommended that the yacht clubs persevere with measures to protect their craft properly and suggested that a trial be made of the carbide gun which was widely used to frighten away birds from orchards.

Dr. Serventy then dissected the four Little Black Cormorants that had been secured by Warden Traynor on the preceding morning. The results were noted as follows:-

1. Female taken at South Perth (large ova) - 29 gobies, 1 gobbleguts, quantity mush.
2. Female taken at Como (large ova) - 29 hardyheads (smelt) and quantity mush.
3. Female taken at Como (very large ova) - 58 gobies and quantity mush.
4. Female taken at Como (immature) - 6 hardyheads and quantity mush.

(NOTE: The fish varied from  $1\frac{1}{4}$  to 2 ins. in length. All birds were taken in fine weather while feeding.)

Dr. Serventy remarked that these results were in line with his 1936 findings.

Concluding the meeting the Minister said further investigations on the feeding habits of cormorants might be of some advantage, but as a year-round picture would need to be made, no little expense would be involved. He would discuss the matter further with Mr. Fraser. He said he realised that shags were quite a nuisance to boat owners, but the views of all sections of the community would need to be considered.

#### NETTING RESTRICTIONS RELAXED

The waters of Broke Inlet (sometimes known as Brookes' Inlet), lying on the south coast some 75 miles west of Albany, which were closed absolutely to net-fishing in August, 1949, have been the subject of consideration by departmental officers and the Fishermen's Advisory Committee. On the recommendation of the latter a fresh proclamation was gazetted on August 7 declaring the Inlet open to netting from June 1 to September 30 in each year.

A proclamation will be published in the Gazette of September 4 rescinding the closure of Cowaramup Bay to net fishing. The opening is effective immediately.