

"At present, all boats are working eighteen to twenty-five miles off-shore, west and south-west of Jurien Bay. There are large areas of sandy bottom in this area, and even more further north, and, with the exception of boats with echo-sounders, the fishermen have found it hard to locate areas of good bottom.

"The fishing boats 'Proton' and 'Sonoma' spent a little over a week in the beginning of the season working from Green Head; and although both these boats are equipped with echo-sounders, and their skippers are competent men, they were unable to find crayfish in sufficiently large quantities, and consequently they returned south and worked from Cervantes.

"During the month of December, the area around Cervantes, where the boats were then working, was producing large quantities of crayfish, but this month, 'Sonoma' and 'Proton' have reported their catches have fallen alarmingly. For example, on the day I visited Cervantes, 'Sonoma' had pulled one hundred pots for two bags, and 'Proton' one hundred pots for five bags."

WATER RATS

Notification has been received from the Director of Fisheries and Game, Melbourne, that some consignments of water rat skins are reaching Melbourne from this State. Since the proclamation of the Fauna Protection Act in July, 1952, water rats have been totally protected and any dealings in their skins other than by the authority of this office is illegal.

Skin merchants and furriers have been advised and requested to supply details of the skins on hand. No action is contemplated to seize present stocks of skins but all firms have been advised that before any export will be permitted authority must first be obtained from this Department. Inspectors are directed to notify this office of any instances coming to their notice either of the taking of water rats or the possession of their skins.