

SPERM WHALE TAKEN

During October, information was received that a sperm whale was taken by the Cheynes Beach Whaling Co. at Albany. The company (which completed taking its humpback quota early in August) has been maintaining a skeleton staff in expectation of taking a number of this species which are not subject to quota or season restrictions. The whale caught was a male, 41' in length, but the oil yield obtained from it was reported to be poor, and the throat and stomach worm infested.

The minimum length prescribed for sperm whales under the Commonwealth Whaling Act and International Regulations is 35 feet, but they have been known to grow to 65 feet. It is the largest of all the toothed whales and it is in this species that the once precious product, ambergris, is formed. In years gone by, sperm whale oil was highly valued for the manufacture of clear-burning candles. The immense blunt front of the head contains a great oil "reservoir" from which up to 30 barrels have been obtained from one large animal.

A RARE VISITOR

On October 19 a Wandering Albatross (Diomedidae exulans) was picked up on Coogee Beach a few miles south of Fremantle. When secured by Inspector G.C. Jeffery, following a report from the storekeeper, the bird was found to be in an exhausted condition and infested with lice. It was taken to the University where arrangements were made for it to be fed and it was hoped that the bird would regain strength and could be released on the following weekend. However, despite a good feed of fish, the bird died next day and the carcass was donated to the Museum.

This species is quite a rare visitor to our coast and only about half a dozen birds are recorded as having been blown ashore in the last twenty five years. It is the largest of all the albatrosses frequenting local seas and has a wing span of up to 11'6".