

PERSONAL PARS

Dr. G.F. Humphrey, Chief of the Division of Fisheries and Oceanography, C.S.I.R.O., was in Perth from March 24 to 29. During his visit, which was largely connected with the tapering-off of research activity in this State, Dr. Humphrey had interviews with the Minister for Fisheries (Mr. Kelly) and discussions with the Superintendent.

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During a recent visit to Perth, the Japanese Ambassador to Australia (Mr. Tadakatsu Suzuki) called on the Superintendent to discuss pearling matters affecting his nationals working in the pearling grounds out of Broome and Onslow.

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Our congratulations go to Dr. D.L. Serventy, a Principal Research Officer of the Wildlife Survey Section, C.S.I.R.O., Perth, a very old friend of the Department, on the recent award to him of a medallion for having contributed most to natural history in Australia during the last year. The award is made annually by a committee of Australian organisations interested in natural history, and is for both educational and research activities.

WHALING - 1956

Catch and production figures for the 1956 humpback whaling season may be seen on page 74. The fin whale taken at Albany was counted the equivalent of one humpback for quota purposes but is shown separately to give a truer picture of production.

While the evidence is not sufficient to take an improvement in the humpback stocks for granted, at least the figures do lend themselves to such a proposition. It will be seen that the average lengths of both males and females continued the upward trend noticed in 1956, but it must be borne in mind that the system of

HUMPBACK WHALING - 1956

STATION AND SPECIES	WHALES TAKEN			AVERAGE LENGTH			PRODUCTION				
	Males	Females	Sex Not Known	Total	Males	Females	O i l			Meal, etc	Solubles
							Total	Per Whale	Per Whale- foot		
					ft.	ft.	barrels	barrels	barrels	tons	tons
Carnarvon (humpbacks)	617	383	-	1,000	40.51	42.37	50,135	50.134	1.216	2,910	1,801
Albany (humpbacks)	58	61	-	119	38.48	41.93	5,801	48.74	1.211	283	149
fin whale	1	-	-	1	66.6	-	60	60.0	.9		2
TOTAL - 1956	676	444	-	1,120	40.34	42.31	55,996	50.00	1.215	3,193	1,952
TOTAL - 1955	577	539	4	1,120	39.9	41.8	54,532	48.7	1.19	2,708	1,002
TOTAL - 1954	690	619	11	1,320	38.8	40.5	62,955	47.7	1.2	3,312	1,425

\* Fin whale production not included in humpback averages.

Ø Plus 42 bales of baleen.

X Plus 337 bales of baleen.

paying bonuses on all whales over 40 feet in length must have had some influence on the increased size. The average number of barrels of oil per whale and per whale-foot also increased. This could have been due to either greater efficiency of extraction methods and machinery, or improvement in the condition of the whales, or both.

Perhaps the most healthy sign was the increase in the percentage of males to the total catch. When the total quotas for Western Australian stations were in 1955 reduced from 1320 to 1120, it was pointed out that the percentage of males taken had dropped alarmingly from 71% in 1949 to 52% in 1954. In 1955 the percentage dropped still further to 51.5. Its rise to 60% in 1956 is therefore encouraging as it suggests an improvement in the sex ratios of the stocks. However, it would be dangerous to take this lone instance as proof of complete recovery of the stocks, as it could so easily have been due to chance, or to a change in seasonal movements, or to some other imponderable.

Keeping in mind the facts that the value of each whale fluctuates according to size and condition, and that the products are marketed at differing prices, the average gross value of each whale is estimated at £1,100 making the annual value of the industry to the State approximately £1,232,000.

#### TROCHUS AND PEARLSHELL INDUSTRY IN TORRES STRAIT

Due to the early commencement of the monsoonal period, the 1956 season in northern Queensland closed some six weeks sooner than usual. Normally it would have gone through to about mid-January. Unfortunately the period which was lost was that in which the best weather normally prevails and good takes are recorded.

The official production figures will no doubt reflect the loss of this period when they become available. Apart from the early onset of the monsoons average weather conditions generally had been experienced.