

A dearth of salmon heads, due to a run of smaller-size salmon during the autumn-winter of this year, may greatly aggravate the situation which might become serious if nothing were done to meet it.

One South-West family of fishermen, ever on the alert to gain an extra penny or two, is capitalising on the present state of affairs. Their contribution to the welfare of the crayfish industry is cobbler heads. Thousands of these are clipped of their stings, boxed and sent on to cold storage at Fremantle.

Sevenpence a lb. is being paid, and already over £200 has been netted by these wide-awake and industrious people.

It's hard, messy work, preparing the heads, but the reward more than compensates for the labour expended.

INTERSTATE FAUNA CONFERENCE

Advice has been received that the above Conference which was to be held on the week commencing September 23, has been postponed until November, due to the ill health of Mr. F.J. Griffiths, Chief Guardian of Fauna, Sydney.

MAINLAND QUOKKAS

In May this year, the first specimens of quokkas secured on the mainland in the last 22 years were obtained in the Gleneagle Forest area, near Byford. Although reports had been received from time to time that these animals still existed in the region between Byford and the Traveller's Arms Hotel, there were many who doubted them and believed they resulted from incorrect observations and confusion with other genera.

The publication earlier in the year of an article in the daily press that the quokka was extinct on the mainland invoked criticism from Mr. H. Atkinson, of Bibra Lake, who agreed to accompany a

party comprising Dr. D.L. Serventy, of the Wildlife Survey Section, C.S.I.R.O., Dr. A.R. Main, of the Department of Zoology, University of W.A., and Hon. Warden Julian Ford to the Gleneagle Forest. There he pointed out swamps where he believed that the quokka still existed. That Mr. Atkinson's belief was soundly based was proved beyond all doubt in subsequent weeks by personnel of the University, who succeeded in trapping three specimens.

Great concern was felt when one of the areas in which the quokka had been found proved later to be on private land, which the owner had bulldozed preparatory to agricultural development. A party was organised by this Department last month to try to establish whether the range of the quokkas was limited only to the swamps and creek beds in which they had already been found. An invitation was extended to Mr. R. Aitken, of Dumbleyung, to accompany the party as he had been the first person, at least in recent years, to report the occurrence of quokka in this area to the Department. Other members of the party included the Fauna Protection Officer (Mr. H.B. Shugg), Technical Officer J. Traynor and Fauna Warden S.W. Bowler, of this Department; Mr. A.J. Milesi, Fire Control Superintendent, Forestry Department, and Mr. C. Kinsella, Forester in charge of the Gleneagle Forest; Mr. Shelley Barker and Mr. R. Sadlier, of the Zoology Department of the University of W.A., and Mr. N. Stewart, of the Wildlife Survey Section, C.S.I.R.O.

Fine weather was encountered the first day, but the onset of storm conditions in the afternoon of the second day caused the early termination of the survey. However, led by Mr. Kinsella, whose intimate local knowledge was of inestimable value, strong evidence was found which suggested that the range of the quokkas was more extensive than had been thought. In the time available, it was not possible to ascertain the limits of the range, but it appeared that it extended some distance north and east of the Albany Highway and could be expected to extend a considerable distance south. In fact, it appeared probable that the animals would be found wherever the habitat was favourable. On the eastern margin of the range a permanent swamp was located which appeared to be temporarily disused by the marsupials. The suggestion was made that the area was almost

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too wet in the winter months, but might be used each summer when surrounding seasonal wet-lands dried up.

In co-operation with the Zoology Department and C.S.I.R.O., it is intended to carry out a minor trapping programme and night surveys in the summer months to establish concrete proof of the quokka's occurrence over the extended range, and possibly to attempt some population studies.