

WHALING

Although they only had one chaser operating while the "Kos VII" was undergoing repairs, the Cheynes Beach Whaling Company secured 20 whales during the week ended July 12, and by July 30 had taken 75 since the season opened. Up to the same period last year this Company had taken 78 of its quota of 120 humpbacks. On July 12, Captain Frank Hughes, who was in command of the chaser "Cheynes", had the misfortune to break an arm when he slipped on the heaving gun platform. After the "Cheynes" had taken Captain Hughes back to port, she sailed again immediately under the command of Captain Christensen. The fitting of a new propeller and tail shaft to the "Kos VII" was completed and the chaser taken to sea on July 22 under command of Captain Hughes. The actual shooting, however, will be done by the first mate (C. Stubbs) until Captain Hughes' fracture has knitted.

The Nor'-West Whaling Company, up to the week ending July 26, had taken 259 humpbacks. This is almost one hundred less than the number taken for the same period during 1957. It is expected that the southerly gales experienced during July will have started the whales on their annual northward migration to warmer waters in earnest. The Manager of the Station, Mr. H. Martin, said that a similar scarcity of whales earlier in the season had been experienced in 1952, but by September the migration had become intense. It is not expected that the Company will have any difficulty in taking its quota of 1,000 whales this season.

A note of warning regarding the Western Australian humpback stocks is struck by Dr. Graham Chittleborough, of the Division of Fisheries and Oceanography, C.S.I.R.O., in Divisional Report 17, "Australian Catches of Humpback Whales, 1957".

In suggesting that all is not well in Western Australia, he says that the catch of humpbacks made at Carnarvon in 1957 was less favourable than that of catches in the two previous years. At Albany, he says, the catching rate has declined very considerably since 1955 and the quota was not filled in 1957. Poorer weather conditions along the west coast could,

he thinks, have had some effect, but the available evidence indicates that the stock of whales hunted in the West is continuing to decline. From an examination of females over the period 1951-57, it appears to Dr. Chittleborough that in this declining population the younger whales are now growing at faster rates than the whales of similar age during the period 1951-54.

As opposed to this situation, Dr. Chittleborough concludes, after examining the catches in the eastern States, that the humpback stocks on the east coast are in relatively sound condition.