

A suggestion was made that, as the real cause of the mortality had been determined the opening date of the season could be brought forward again to March 1. Bearing in mind its simultaneous recommendation that a close season be introduced from August 15 to November 14 throughout the area, the Committee agreed to support the suggestion, and the opening date was in 1960 brought forward to March 1. At the meeting of the Committee later that year, fishermen gave evidence that early season mortality in 1960 had been negligible and recommended that the 1961 season again open on March 1. This recommendation was again accepted. This year, however, start-of-season mortality has been high, both in holding crates and on carrier-boats, despite the prevention of pre-season fishing. Inspector A.T. Pearce reports that 80% of fishermen at the Abrolhos this year favour delaying the opening of the season next year until March 15. Losses, he writes, have been as high as 33% in the crates. These losses will be kept in mind when the Advisory Committee takes evidence on crayfishing and other matters in Geraldton later this year.

Reports coming to hand in April referred to the good catches of crayfish, notwithstanding bad weather encountered before and after the Easter holidays.

REPORTS ON ABROLHOS FAUNA

Some interesting notes have been received from Inspectors who, as reported above, were stationed at the Abrolhos to police the final days of the close season. Inspector G.D. Houston said that on February 25 he carried out a foot patrol on East Wallabi Island. Species of birds observed during the patrol included white-breasted and red-backed seas eagles, small flocks of turnstones, red-capped dotterels and black-tailed godwits. Mr. Houston added that all the wallabies he had seen appeared to be in good condition. These animals are an interesting island form of tammar.

Writing from the Southern group, Cadet Inspector R.G. Emery said that on February 23 he had sighted approximately 1,000 mutton birds at their rookery on the southern end of Pelsart (Long) Island. Mr. Emery also listed the species and numbers of resident birds at different islands. Referring to fish he reported that few mullet were sighted and only a few snapper. Local fishermen told him that there were not the same quantities of snapper and jewfish as in previous years, but large schools of tuna and Spanish mackerel had been seen. They were said to be about much earlier than in other years.

In the Easter group, where Assistant Inspector N.K. Henry was stationed, large numbers of sooty terns, silver gulls and pied cormorants were observed, with smaller quantities of fairy terns, some

pacific gulls, ospreys and one large sea eagle. Mr. Henry also made the interesting comment that he observed three seals, two females and a large male, which he thought were fur seals.

We would appreciate reports of any further observations of seals made in the Abrolhos as we would not expect fur seals to be that far north.

Sea-going staff are requested to check again the article and diagrams published in the January, 1961, issue of this Bulletin which set out means of distinguishing between hair and fur seals.