

PEARLING

No fishing for pearlshell by foreign fleets will be permitted in the Western Australian Division during the next three years. This is the substance of a letter received by the Minister from the Minister for Primary Industry in Canberra (Mr. Adermann).

The Northern Territory has, by a recent proclamation, been brought into line with Western Australia and Queensland by taking such action as will allow the Territory's Administration to control pearling and pearl-culturing in territorial waters. Hitherto the Territory's territorial waters had not been subject to such control.

A press statement attributed to Mr. Adermann states that Japanese fleets will again be allowed to take a maximum of 415 tons of shell from those Australian waters which have not been denied to them. There is a condition in the agreement reached between the Commonwealth and Japanese Governments on the matter that no Japanese vessel shall work within 10 miles of the mainland or of any inhabited island. Last year only 384 tons of shell was fished by Japanese luggers.

On pages 59 and 60 are published tables showing details of pearlshell production in the past five years. It is not non-availability of shell which has produced the downward trend, but rather the falling-off in demand brought about by strong competition from plastics.

FAUNA PROTECTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE'S TOUR

Led by the Chairman (Mr. Fraser), members of the Fauna Protection Advisory Committee last month toured areas in the Great Southern and the South-West. In addition to the Chairman, Messrs. J. B. Higham and A. H. Robinson and the Secretary, Mr. H. B. Shugg, participated in the full tour while Drs. W. D. L. Rido and A. R. Main returned to Perth after the first day.

A brief visit was made to two timber reserves and an "A" class recreational reserve about 14 miles north-west of Pingelly. Boyagin Rock, which is contained within the "A" class reserve, actually consists of two colossal rocks - that on the northern side being bare while that on the south is vegetated with shrubs and a species of mallee. The last-named proved to be a most attractive species, Eucalyptus caesia, a pink-flowered tree which had not previously been recorded west of Kellerberrin. The country surrounding the rocks is very rough and wild with laterite breakaways on the hills and huge granite boulders in the valleys. There are in the area

some very dense stands of prickly poison, while close to the rock scratches, probably by possums, were sighted on a young marri near a pool. Dr. Main, who has since revisited the area, confirmed earlier reports that tammar exist and may be plentiful on this reserve. It was agreed that the reserves should be revisited and intensive collections made of their flora and fauna.

An inspection was made of reserve 25555 at East Pingelly. This reserve, which contains about 3,000 acres, is generally agreed as being the leading one in Western Australia, as far as mammals are concerned. Species collected or reliably reported to occur on this reserve include grey kangaroo, brush kangaroo (or brush wallaby), numbat, wambenger, woillie, tammar, quenda and chudich (native cat). Dr. Main pointed out areas of regenerating casuarina and box poison which, he said, was favoured habitat for tammar and woillies. Scratchings of woillies and quendas were seen to be most common. Members were also amazed at the number of tracks of small marsupials which crossed a fire-break into a privately-owned paddock which had been cleared and cropped. This was visual evidence that the population of small macropods in the reserve was surprisingly large. A distinct event for the party was the sighting of two mallee hens in the north-eastern section of the reserve.

The next day, the members of the Committee were escorted through the Dryandra-Congelin reserves by the forester in charge of the Dryandra State Forest, Mr. J. Currie. This country is the best stronghold in the State for that attractive marsupial ant-eater, the numbat, whose proper conservation demands that all this area be retained in its woodland state. The reserves contain some excellent sections of wandoo forest, including both the true wandoo and powder-bark wandoo.

In the afternoon the Committee met representatives of the West Arthur Road Board and the Lake Towerrinning Development Committee at Lake Towerrinning, near Mudiarrup. Members were pleased to meet also Mr. J.R. Schinzig, honorary warden, who is well known to some of our inspectors and a great worker for the Department in the area. The Committee was told that the Board, which owns a few acres of adjoining land and has erected amenities on it, had no control over swimmers using the Lake during regattas, nor of restricting the movement of the public at large between the recreational reserve and the water's edge. The need to control the public during regattas and to prevent shooting and generally supervising boating and other aquatic activities made it essential, the Chairman of the Board maintained, for the Committee to surrender its vesting order in favour of the Board. After discussions members were taken to the western side of the Lake by Mr. Schinzig and shown wetland waterfowl breeding habitat.



The representations made by the local authority are to be discussed at the next full meeting of the Committee and a decision conveyed to the Board in due course.

At Busselton, the Committee met the leader of a group of landholders (Mr. Gavin McGregor) who had petitioned the Minister for Lands that the Broadwater (which is an ephemeral lake surrounded by swampland to the west of Busselton) be declared a sanctuary for fauna. Mr. McGregor and his daughter showed the party over that part of his property which surrounds the Broadwater and explained his difficulties. That evening, at a public meeting called by the Busselton Road Board, the views of the landholders and of shooters and honorary wardens were expressed. The Director reminded the meeting that the true function of the Department was not to protect private property as such and that the opening of any areas to shooting did not **authorise** shooters to trespass. He thought from what the Committee had seen of the Broadwater members would agree that the reserved land in the centre was too small to keep as a sanctuary unless it were increased by surrounding landholders **agreeing** with the Minister to keep their land in its natural state in perpetuity. Complaints having been made of the use of spot-lights and the destruction of notices, the Director pointed out that policing the Act had its difficulties. The Department employed only two regular wardens and was compelled to rely very largely on honorary assistants. He said that notices were of limited use as they appeared to be ignored by the persons at whom they were specifically directed. Mr. Fraser advised the meeting that the Department would write to the Board and seek its considered opinion before making any firm recommendation to the Minister.

The return to Perth was interrupted for a brief call at the fauna farm of Mr. E.W. Ecclestone, of Boyanup. Mr. Ecclestone explained his plans to create a sanctuary north of his existing aviaries in a 100-acre paddock. He had already commenced the construction of a dam to provide water for the fauna he hoped the Department would permit him to hold. Mr. Ecclestone was advised that the matter would be considered at the next full meeting of the Committee and a decision conveyed to him regarding the future development of his farm.