## FRESHWATER CROCODILES

Under the authority of the Minister for Fisheries, Mr. Hutchinson, a press release has been issued calling attention to the protection afforded the small freshwater crocodile known as Johnston's Crocodile. This reptile's legal status was reviewed recently by the Fauna Protection Advisory Committee which confirmed that protection should be continued for the reasons set out in the press release – the text of which is reproduced hereunder:-

"Despite the inherent dislike some people might have of all their kind, the small species of freshwater crocodiles known as Johnston's Crocodiles were protected, Chief Warden of Fauna (Mr. A.J. Fraser) said today. This meant, Mr. Fraser continued, that they were not to be destroyed for sport or commercially exploited.

"They were protected, the Chief Warden explained, because –

* being slow breeding animals, particularly easy to shoot and restricted to freshwater pools and rivers, they could easily be exterminated from limited areas;

* they were quite harmless to man and were timid creatures;

* they were part of the biota and of particular scientific interest as they were descended fairly directly from dinosaurs;

* their range in Australia was understood to be declining, probably as a result of human interference and predation.

In recent months, Mr. Fraser added, the Department had received several reports that a considerable number of these harmless creatures were being destroyed either as a so-called sport or for the value of their skins. He reminded all persons in the Kimberley Division, to which the species was limited, that they should note carefully the protection afforded these creatures as anyone who took them by any means for any purpose whatsoever, was liable to prosecution unless he was in possession of a special scientific license. The only exception to this general rule was that a native within the meaning of the Native Welfare Act, 1905-1960, was permitted to take sufficient for his family's food but not for sale, barter, or exchange."