

Advisory Committee dealt with a considerable amount of business at their meeting in the Fremantle Courthouse on March 28. In the absence of the Director, the chair was taken by Mr B.R. Saville, Chief Clerk.

During a series of interviews with professional and amateur fishermen, and representatives of other organizations, conflicting views on a number of contentious matters were put before members.

The subjects dealt with included -

- \* the conservation of the Fremantle-Jurien Bay crayfish fishery;
- \* use of snapper-traps in Shark Bay; and
- \* trawling in Cockburn Sound.

The Committee also considered matters placed before it during its visit to Geraldton, the Abrolhos Islands and Port Gregory earlier in the month. These comprised -

- \* aerial surveys of closed waters;
- \* limitation of cray pots;
- \* restricting boats to certain fishing grounds;
- \* provision of navigation lights at the Abrolhos;
- \* stationing of inspectors on Abrolhos groups;
- \* seizure of underweight tails;
- \* crayfishing operations on the foreshore of the Pakington townsite;
- \* control of the island jetty at Port Gregory.

After prolonged discussion, both during the interviews and in plenary session, the Committee resolved on 21 recommendations. These will in due course be put before the Minister for Fisheries for his consideration.

#### GOATS SHOT ON BERNIER ISLAND

Thanks to co-operation between the research and fauna sections of the Department, and to the willing assistance of Carnarvon shooters, history was made early last month when a determined effort to protect the habitat of the extremely rare fauna found on Bernier Island was carried out.

Some staff members will recall that in July,



1959, at the request of the Fauna Protection Advisory Committee, in whom the islands are vested, an ecological survey of Bernier and Dorre Islands was undertaken. One of the expedition's recommendations, which were adopted in May, 1961, was that an attempt be made to eliminate the goats which had been introduced many years ago on Bernier Island. The survey party had found that these animals were seriously interfering with the environment to the detriment of the native fauna. It was forecast that if the goats were left undisturbed, they would, in time, by destroying the flora lead to the extinction of much of the fauna, for the conservation of which the Islands had been set aside. In its report the party referred to the established fact that overgrazing by goat populations was the major cause of the creation of much of the present desert country in the Middle East. A repetition of those events must be avoided if the flora and the fauna on Bernier Island are to be saved.

Rounding up and removal of the goats would have been too time-consuming and costly, and it was reluctantly decided that the only practical method was to attempt mass destruction. As poisoning was out of the question, it was resolved to organize a shooting-party.

With the first-rate assistance of Mr A.R. Whitworth, honorary warden, of Carnarvon, who organized a team of volunteer riflemen, and the co-operation of the research section, the party was landed by the R.V. "Peron" at Red Cliff Point, near the southern end of Bernier Island, on March 4. Fauna Warden S.W. Bowler, who took over the direction of the party, reports that the operations were reasonably successful. Once ashore, the shooters were quickly formed into a line and a drive was made from the Point southwards to Cape Couture, shooting continuing until dark. By this time 23 goats had been destroyed and two kids captured. The next morning the party moved off towards Cape Ronsard at the northern end of the 18-mile-long island. The shooters, 18 in number, were spaced about 500 yards apart and covered the whole width of the island. Mr Bowler says, and we can well believe it, that the drive to Cape Ronsard was no picnic. The shooters, loaded down with their heavy rifles (.303's were used), struggled over the rough and undulating country which ranged from soft drift sand and sandhills, to razor-backed limestone outcrops and cliffs. It was a very weary party which finally reached the distant northern cape. Indeed, Mr Bowler says, some were so "tuckered out" that they flopped fully clad into the water to revive themselves. They were taken aboard "Peron", the crew of which had picked up the campers' gear from Red Cliff Point

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and were returned to Carnarvon at 7.p.m.

Naturally enough, during the shoot, no time could be spent searching for fauna, but Mr Bowler reported that of the rare marsupials, a few Banded Hare-Wallabies and Boodie Rats were seen, while Western Hare-Wallabies were very plentiful. He was pleased to report, he said, that there were no accidents and, apart from the goats, none of the fauna was molested. Indeed, the behaviour of the whole party was above reproach, all members being most co-operative. The total number of goats destroyed was 69.

It is hoped to arrange a further expedition before the "Peron" returns to Fremantle after she has completed her present assignment.