

C.S.I.R.O. TO SELL "DERWENT HUNTER"

Advice has recently been received from the Administrative Officer of the Division of Fisheries and Oceanography, C.S.I.R.O. (Mr G.R. Williams) that the fisheries research vessel "Derwent Hunter" is considered to be no longer suitable for the kind of research that the Division intends to carry out and it has been decided to take her out of service. She will be offered for sale by public tender in the near future. Mr Williams added that it was not proposed to replace "Derwent Hunter" immediately and for the time being the Division would operate from chartered vessels and, if suitable arrangements could be made, from commercial fishing vessels.

An auxiliary ketch, the "Derwent Hunter" is a 71-ft. craft with an 18-ft. beam and a cruising speed of 8 knots. Her crew of six comprised skipper, engineer, mate, two deckhands and cook. Accommodation was also available for scientific and technical personnel. She was originally purchased by C.S.I.R.O. in 1951 for work on shark and barracouta in south-eastern Australian waters and, initially, was based at Hobart.

MORE SHORT-NECKED TORTOISES FOUND

On June 8, Fauna Wardens S.W. Bowler and N.E. McLaughlan were delighted to find, in broad daylight, five of these little animals on the reserve at Bullsbrook. They were on one of the routine inspections described in previous issues and were particularly pleased with the discovery as it indicated that the tortoises still remained in the general area which was swept by a severe bushfire early this year. On the same day they encountered a farmer who had found an additional short-necked tortoise in a culvert under an adjacent road. On June 25, advice was received from the Department of Agriculture's research station, which is only half a mile from one section of the reserve, that a further specimen had been found in a shallow pool adjacent to the manager's residence. Fauna Warden McLaughlan visited the area on the following day and found another specimen in the middle of a bitumen road leading to the station, while an adjoining farmer found another one in a shallow pond on his property. These discoveries brought the total number found this year to eleven. All have been released on the reserve. The last three have had identification numbers painted on segments of their carapaces so that their movements can be plotted if they are found again.

(129)

By agreement with the Weeds & Seeds Branch of the Department of Agriculture, the boundaries of the reserves are to be sprayed with a hormone to control the growth of a declared noxious weed, Cape Tulip, heavy infestations of which occur in the area. We are assured that the spray will not affect the tortoises.