

Should a tagged fish be bleeding when captured, and seem unlikely to survive if returned to the sea, C.S.I.R.O. wishes the local inspector to take possession of it. If a C.S.I.R.O. officer is available, the fish could then be handed over to him, otherwise it should be frozen and advice sent to this office.

It is topical to recall that in the December 1962 - February 1963 report of the Western Fisheries Project, it is recorded that 8 tuna tagged in Western Australian waters during the first half of 1962, had been retaken in the South Australian tuna fishery early in 1963. This, the report said, was the first definite proof that the Western Australian juvenile stocks contributed to the stocks fished farther east.

WHALING

Critical Plight of Humpbacks

In his report to the Western Fisheries Regional Committee last February, Dr. R.G. Chittleborough, of the Division of Fisheries and Oceanography, C.S.I.R.O., reported that the catches of humpbacks on the Western Australian coast had been discussed at a meeting of the Scientific Committee of the International Whaling Commission, and also by the Committee of Three - each of whom is a specialist in fisheries population dynamics. Using three different methods, the Committee estimated that the Group IV (Western Australian) humpback stock of mature individuals had numbered approximately 10,000 in 1949, when the post-war exploitation began, but had fallen to about 1,000 in 1962. The Committee also estimated that the present-day stock could be sustained only by limiting the catch to less than fifteen individuals a year. It was further estimated that even if there were a complete cessation of whaling, it would still be 34 years before the stock would build up again to the 1949 strength, and that a catch of only two hundred and fifty whales a year would then be the maximum that could be taken without seriously depleting it.

International Commission to Meet

The fifteenth meeting of the International Whaling Commission will be held in London on July 1. It will consider the findings, mentioned above, and the

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recommendations of the Committee of Three. One of the recommendations is that there should be a total prohibition on the taking of humpbacks for a considerable number of years - probably 50 years or more. The Committee has also recommended drastic reductions in the take of blue whales, fin whales and pigmy blue whales.

Local Whaling Continues

Meanwhile, at Carnarvon, the Nor'-West Whaling Company intended to commence its humpback whaling season on July 1. It has been allotted a quota of 450 humpbacks this year. This Company's chasers took its first sperm whale for the season on June 3, and had secured a total of 37 sperms by June 27.

The Cheynes Beach Whaling Company, which has been allotted a quota of 100 humpbacks this season, took its first whale of this species on June 13, and by June 29 a total of 8 humpbacks had been taken. This Company is continuing to operate on sperm whales, and by June 29 had secured a total of 198.