

NOTES FROM NEWSDolphin Aground in Swan River

Last month two boys walking along the foreshore of the Swan River found an 8 ft. dolphin stranded on a sand-bank 500 yards from the shore in Lucky Bay. Their attempts to move the dolphin, which weighed approximately 350 lb., to deeper water were unsuccessful. While the boys' father contacted this Department for assistance, the boys splashed water over the dolphin to keep it from drying out in the hot sun. In the opinion of Inspector R. Hammond, who had arrived to supervise rescue operations, their action probably saved the dolphin's life. A sling was made of bags and the dolphin was eventually carried to deeper water and released. It was last seen swimming towards Fremantle.

The appearance of dolphins in the Swan River is becoming less frequent. The schools which in the past could be seen chasing fish over shallow banks, rubbing against buoys and piles, and drawing cries of delight from children on the pleasure ferries around which they would frolic, are becoming fewer. No sound explanation for the dolphins' apparent reluctance to move up river has been advanced. However, as we are told that these mammals communicate by emitting high frequency sounds, it is possible that the increased number of pleasure craft using the Swan River, particularly those propelled by high-powered motors, could have a disturbing effect on the dolphins and their method of communication. On the other hand, ecological changes wrought in the river by the advances of civilization may be a prime factor.