

RECHERCHE ARCHIPELAGO SEALS

A recent survey of the islands of the Recherche Archipelago, near Esperance, has confirmed that the population of Hair and Fur Seals is still struggling to recover from the operations that took place many years ago. The seals on these islands have been protected from 1892 to the present day, with only one open season, in 1920. So after nearly 70 years they have still not fully recovered from the "bad old days".

The Director of Fisheries and Fauna has decided that because of this situation no further permits to take seals are to be issued without a preliminary investigation and recommendation by competent departmental personnel.

Any requests for permits should be forwarded to the Fauna Officer who will arrange the appropriate investigation.

BEAGLE ISLAND

Seagoing Inspector Denis Wright visited Beagle Island with Inspector Willey during April and reported that seal activity appeared to be normal. Approximately thirty-five seals were sighted, of which four were mature bulls.

One dead seal was found by Inspector Wright among the weed and a small carcass was discovered on the sands at the northern end. While the cause of death was impossible to determine, a large number of shot-gun cases were found at several points around Eastern Island, as well as several used cartons previously containing .22 high-speed ammunition. Although it is not possible to say with certainty that shooters are damaging the fauna population of this sanctuary, it is certainly an indication that illegal shooting has occurred from time to time.

Birds sighted by the two inspectors included Pied Cormorants, Silver Gulls, Crested Terns, one immature Pacific Gull, one Kingfisher and what they described as a "Grey Egret", probably a Reef Heron in the dark phase.