

The "M.S.B.", primarily designed as a means of communication between Departmental officers will now revert to this function. To mark the occasion it has been decided to rename the "M.S.B." the "Monthly Staff Bulletin" as from the July 1968 issue.

As a result of these changes the mailing list for the "M.S.B." has been revised. Commencing with the July issue, the "M.S.B." will be available only to Departmental officers, Committees and inter-state Fisheries Departments.

OIL POLLUTION ON THE SWAN RIVER

When the oil tanker 'Torrey Canyon' came to grief off the coast of Cornwall in March 1967, a report by the Cornwall Naturalists' Trust declared that "sometime, somewhere, another tanker will be wrecked, and oil will contaminate other shores!"

It has happened, less than twelve months later, and right on our doorstep. On Sunday, February 18, the lighter "Norwhale" sank in the Fremantle Harbour after taking onboard about 400 tons of sullage oil from the aircraft carrier H.M.S. Eagle. It was no major disaster in comparison to the 117,000 tons of crude oil spilled by the 'Torrey Canyon', but it was sufficient to contaminate parts of the lower Swan River and its foreshores. It was also sufficiently clear by its occurrence that it can happen, anywhere, and how disastrous oil pollution is.

Inspections made by Departmental officers during the week following the sinking of "Norwhale", revealed that oil polluted parts of the river foreshore as far up as Como. Luckily only a few individual waterbirds were stained by the oil, and these suffered no apparent ill-effects.

In the Pelican Point area, 2 out of 6 Pelicans and 3 Pied Cormorants were oil stained. Other birds present were apparently not affected. There appeared to be no oil present on the beach or on the water. On the Claremont foreshore oil polluted the area between Point Resolution and Victoria Avenue. One badly oiled Silver gull was captured. It was washed in a weak detergent and warm water solution, and dried. Two days later it seemed recovered, resumed drinking and began to preen itself. Eventually it was released. On the Chidley foreshore oil was present only in the form of a slick on the water. No birds appeared to be affected by it.

On the south side of the river, the area between the Leeuwin boatsheds and Preston Point appeared to be heavily polluted. Despite this, only two Pied Cormorants were observed with oiled plumage. Pollution was also heavy between Blackwall Reach and Point Walter Spit, but only 4 of the 160 Silver gulls present were affected by oil, on the lower body and tail. On approach these birds flew off. Three Pelicans present were slightly stained by oil.

Although many miles of foreshore were affected by the oil, most of the evidence was gone within one week of the mishap. The quick action taken by all authorities concerned, was indeed heartening. The only bird captured by Departmental personnel, a Silver gull, was in an advanced stage of moult. If other birds affected by the oil were in a similar or less advanced stage of moult, then contaminated plumage would soon be replaced.