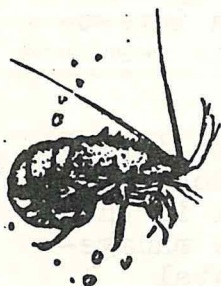


THE DIRECTOR LOOKS INTO THE 1970s

The Director of Fisheries and Fauna, Mr. B.K. Bowen, B.Sc., in a talk on A.B.C. Radio on January 13, spoke of the challenge the 1970s will provide to the Department and its officers.

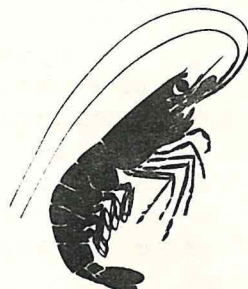
Mr. Bowen said:

"This is the first talk for 1970 in this series by officers of the Department of Fisheries and Fauna. It is, therefore, the first talk in this new decade, and it is, perhaps, appropriate to look at the past decade and give some pointers to the developments which are likely to occur within the Department during the 1970s.



Management of the rock lobster industry has been the dominating factor during the past years. This industry is now tightly regulated and our principal aim is to ensure that the fishery persists and continues to provide a satisfactory living for those engaged in it. It follows then, that in this fishery, management research will continue and be expanded in the 1970s. We need more precise information on the year by year recruitment of young rock lobsters, and the factors which cause variations in recruitment. We have an urgent need for an oceanographic vessel in the rock lobster research programme so that data may be gathered on the pattern of water movements along our west coast, and the distributions of the rock lobster larvae in this water mass. I foresee then, in the 1970s, an expansion in the rock lobster research programme to a size which will give both administration and industry a far better understanding of the dynamics of this most valuable fishery. In talking about what we will be doing in rock lobster research in the 1970s, I am referring to the research team which includes both officers of the Department of Fisheries and Fauna, and the Division of Fisheries and Oceanography, C.S.I.R.O. which work as an integrated group.

If the Western Australian fishing industry is to develop, we need to recognise that the rock lobster industry is now fully exploited and further development will be as a result of exploiting other species. Prawns look the most promising, and in this sphere I visualise a development in the technique of locating the



stocks of banana prawns which occur in our northern waters. It seems to me that technological advances in fish-finding equipment are the key to future successes. This applies not only to industry in relation to catching fish, but also to those entrusted with the difficult problem of managing the exploited stocks.

After prawns - scallops, tuna and bottom trawl fisheries are likely to be developed further, and in that order. The scallop fishery is a certainty; the major problems being one of handling the product, including treatment of a parasitic worm, and one of managing the resource to ensure rational exploitation.

The question of fish meal often arises in discussions of future development. I place this well down on my list of possibilities for the 1970s because of the high investment capital cost involved and the magnitude of the resource required.

Turning now to the functions of the Department involved in fauna conservation, I see three major developments during the next decade. These are greater control in the taking of kangaroos, increased activity in reserve management and the establishment of a unit of environmental studies.

The community at large has, quite rightly, shown concern about the kangaroo populations. Over the past few years there has been increased activity on the part of professional kangaroo shooters to provide a product for the pet food industry. In the Eastern States, especially New South Wales, a combination of the drought years and high exploitation has reduced the populations to a marked degree. Western Australia is now starting to feel the same effects from professional shooting. Accepting always that there are some areas where kangaroos are a problem to farmers and number control is required, the Department will in the 1970s become much more involved in kangaroo regulation. (See talk on A.B.C. Radio by Research Officer R.I.T. Prince elsewhere in this Bulletin - Editor).

A system of reserves throughout Western Australia is in the process of being established. The next five years are probably critical in this sphere and there will be considerable activity by those of the fauna research group engaged in reserve surveys and acquisition. Australia has a unique assemblage of fauna and we in Western Australia have a responsibility to ensure that areas of land are set

aside which enable representative populations of that fauna to persist. Moreover, some of the reserves because of their smallness of size require manipulation to provide an adequate environment in which to live. During the 1970s research on reserve manipulation will be expanded and will assume increasing importance.

Lastly, I refer to the subject of environmental studies, a very broad subject which sets out to understand the changes which will flow from the alterations to the environment being effected by man. I see the establishment of an environmental study unit as one of the most exciting possibilities during the next decade."

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