Chapter II—continued

Part 4—The Fauna of Western Australia

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DISTRIBUTION

Terrestrial Vertebrates

An observer who looks carefully at the fauna of a large land mass like the Australian continent will soon discover that its animals are not distributed uniformly throughout it. He will find that groups of species which are characteristic of some places are missing from others. This is because the distribution of animals results both from their response to the physical (*i.e.* ecological) conditions of their environment (and these are not uniform from place to place), and from their past histories. For example, the presence of routes along which a species could have moved in the past, and of barriers which would have made its movement from one place to another impossible, decide whether any species could have reached a particular locality by today. But whether it has persisted there until today depends upon local conditions having been suitable for it.

The relationship between the distribution of a species and the character of its environment may be demonstrated dramatically and most easily by comparing the distribution of animals with that of climate, and in particular with its components of temperature, rainfall and the time of the year at which rain falls. In Western Australia many species lie within one or other of the boundaries of two rather different climatic regions. These are the South-West with its regular and plentiful rainfall during cold winters, and the Kimberley with regular, plentiful rainfall during hot summers. The remainder of the State receives intermittent and unreliable rainfall in quantities which vary widely; some parts of this area (*e.g.* the Pilbara) receive their small amount of rain principally in the summer and other parts (*e.g.* the Nullarbor) in the winter.

An analysis of most of the Western Australian groups of vertebrate animals shows that they can be referred to three faunal assemblages characteristic of these climatic regions. These assemblages are called *faunas* and have been named by zoogeographers *Bassian* which, in this State, is the fauna characteristic of the South-West; *Torresian* which, in this State, is characteristic of the Kimberley; and *Eyrean* which is the fauna which occupies the land between. While the composition of a fauna is, generally speaking, characteristic of the area in which it occurs, the occurrence of a particular species in a fauna does not mean that it will not be found in another because each of the faunas has several elements which are sufficiently wide in their requirements for them to occur as 'foreigners' in the faunas of neighbouring regions. Examples of these are the species with predominantly Torresian populations (and apparently histories of origin) which are found today in the otherwise Eyrean fauna of the Pilbara district of the North-West; and various Eyrean species which occur in the Bassian fauna of the South-West.

Among the birds the sharpest faunal break is between the Torresian fauna of the Kimberley division and the Eyrean fauna of the Pilbara. The Kimberley is the headquarters in Western Australia of the Scrub Fowl (*Megapodius freycinet*), the Fruit Pigeons (Ptilinopinae), Lorikeets (*Trichoglossus* and *Psitteuteles*), the White Cockatoo (*Cacatua galerita*) and most of the Grass Finches. The Torresian species which penetrate further southwards include the Brolga (normally only to Onslow), White-breasted Wood Swallow (to Shark Bay), and the Brown Honeyeater (right through to the South-West).

Among mammals there seem to be a few truly Torresian species in Western Australia. Examples would be the Fruit Bats or Flying Foxes (*Pteropus* and *Macroglossus*), the Little Rock Wallaby (*Peradorcas concinna*), the Jungle or River Wallaby (*Macropus agilis*) and the Antelope Kangaroo (*Macropus antilopinus*). On the whole most of the mammal species which occur in the Kimberley seem to be characteristic of that part of the Eyrean fauna inhabiting the country which receives intermittent rainfall during the summer.

Even among birds, the boundary between the majority of the Eyrean species and the bulk of the Bassian species is less well defined than that which separates Eyrean and Torresian faunas as there is a good deal of overlapping. For example, the line which separates the woodland eucalypts and the mulga, the so-called 'mulga-eucalypt line', is the extreme limit of most Bassian species, though many do not range inland beyond a line connecting Geraldton, Moora, Northam and the Stirling Range. The mulga-eucalypt line separates, to quote an example, the main distributions of the Grey Kangaroo (Bassian) and the Red Kangaroo (Eyrean). This line is the northern limit of other well known Bassian species such as the Red Wattle Bird.

The South-West of the State has representatives of many well known Bassian species also found in south-eastern Australia. These include among birds, the Brush Bronzewing, White-tailed Black Cockatoo, Western Rosella, Scarlet Robin, Yellow Robin, Southern Emu-Wren, Silvereye, White-naped Honeyeater, Western Spinebill, New Holland Honeyeater and Red-eared Firetail. Among mammals there are the Pigmy Possum, the Wambenger, the Grey Kangaroo, the Tammar Wallaby, the Brush Possum and various dunnarts (marsupial mice, *Sminthopsis*). Among frogs there are various *Crinia* and *Heleioporus inornatus* and *australiacus*; and fishes such as *Galaxias* and *Nannoperca*. However, there has been an extensive intermingling of Eyrean and Bassian elements in the South-West on a scale not paralleled in south-eastern Australia. In the South-West we have a blend of faunas in the sclerophyll forests which, though essentially Bassian in character, contain such Eyrean intrusives as the Purple-crowned Lorikeet, the Twentyeight Parrot, the Rufous Tree-creeper, the Western Warbler, the Banded Blue Wren and the Red-tipped Diamond-bird.

It must be recognised also that the distribution of animals that we see today may be a very recent pattern, and subject to continual fluctuation. Studies of fossil pollen in the South-West suggest there have been fluctuations in the relative abundance of Jarrah, Marri and Karri trees over the last few thousand years. Even more marked fluctuations in vegetation may have been produced by climatic changes accompanying glaciation and deglaciation in high latitudes and altitudes over the past 2 million years. Marked changes in vegetation would usually be accompanied by changes in fauna. We know that the Marsupial Wolf or Tiger (*Thylacinus*), the Koala (*Phascolarctos*) and other marsupials, some of them now extinct throughout their ranges in Australia, once lived in the South-West, and it is possible that climatic changes were responsible for their vanishing from that area of Western Australia.

Climatic alterations, on a minor scale, are constantly going on. In the past half-century, or longer, there has been a considerable change in northern Europe, Asia and America, an amelioration in some parts and a drying-up in others, with widespread effects on the distribution of animals. Something similar appears to have been taking place in Western Australia. Many dry-country bird species, of the Eyrean faunal assemblage, have made notable extensions of range into the south-west corner. These include the Galah, Little Corella, Budgerygah, Smoker Parrot, Crested Pigeon, Black-faced Woodswallow, Crested Bell-bird, Blue-and-white Wren, Black-throated Butcher-bird and Little Crow. The records of local naturalists, who keep district lists of local birds and mammals over a period of years, are very useful sources of data for plotting these changes. Frequent Museum surveys will provide more positive information.

In some cases distribution changes due to natural causes may be masked or modified through the alterations of habitat due to settlement. These habitat changes act to the detriment of woodland birds but favour open-country species (like pipits and plovers).

Coastal Marine Fauna[1]

The nature of the coastal waters varies from the warm mangrove-lined mud flats of the north to the clean sandy bays and cool crystal-clear waters of the south. The types of coastal marine habitats depend on the range of tide, the exposure to oceanic swells, the sediments carried off the land by wind or river and some local biological activities such as reef coral or algal building. There is a gradual change in water temperature, salinity and other physical characteristics of the sea as one moves along the long Western Australian coastline of 12,500 kilometres; these changes reflect the nature of the adjacent water mass modified by local effects such as occur in large and small embayments, near river mouths or behind protecting headlands. The coastal waters may be divided into the following broad zones:

1. North: from the Western Australian-Northern Territory border to Cape Leveque with very broken coastline, a high tidal range, high runoff from well vegetated hinterland and no exposure to heavy oceanic swell.
2. North-north-west: from Cape Leveque to Cape Keraudren with eighty miles of low beach, a high tidal range, little regular runoff from desert sands which are blown into the sea by the ' South-East Trades '.
3. North-west: from Cape Keraudren to North West Cape with an indented coastline, moderate tidal range, irregular runoff from some mountains and desert sands.
4. West-north-west: from North West Cape to Kalbarri with some high cliffs, a deep embayment (Shark Bay), moderate tidal range, irregular low runoff from little vegetated desert hinterland and exposure to the south-west oceanic swell. A barrier coral reef, unique in Western Australia, runs southward from North West Cape for nearly 160 kilometres.
5. West-south-west: from Kalbarri to Cape Naturaliste with fairly smooth low white sandy coastline and some limestone headlands; rainfall moderate with little runoff from coastal sands, water clear; tidal range low, offshore coastal reefs give some protection to the coast from the south-west swell.
6. South-west: from Cape Naturaliste to Israelite Bay with broken headland and surf beach formations, high south-west swell exposure, low tidal range, many inlets and low-volume river discharges.
7. South-east: from Israelite Bay to the Western Australian-South Australian border with smooth coastal outline of beaches and some cliffs, modified exposure to south-west swell, low tidal range and low rainfall runoff.

Certain coastal marine areas are special in the sense that they represent either a transition (*i.e.* rapid change of character) between two adjacent zones or possess unique features found in such combinations nowhere else on the coast. Examples of such special places are the coastal waters in the Broome to Derby region, around North West Cape, in Exmouth Gulf, in Shark Bay, the Perth metropolitan beaches (including Cockburn Sound), around Cape Naturaliste and around Cape Leeuwin.

The islands and reefs off the coast are also regarded as special because of their marine faunal peculiarities; for example, the Houtman Abrolhos, the Monte Bellos, the Rowley Shoals, the North West Cape Barrier Reef and the Recherche Archipelago.

The marine fauna of the north coast is distinct from that of the south coast although a few species do occur in both regions. The northern fauna is regarded as part of the Indo-West Pacific fauna, and the southern fauna of Western Australia as part of the southern Australian fauna. Some species of both these faunas extend and overlap along the west coast and there are several species which are endemic to this region only. One of these is the Western Australian commercial rock lobster *Panulirus cygnus* and another is the Western Australian commercial jewfish *Glaucosoma hebraicum*.

Fauna of Inland Waters [2]

The inland waters are of many types and possess very varied faunas. They may be divided into four main ecological groupings: (1) the rivers of the Kimberley Division;

[1] Written in collaboration with Dr R. W. George. [2] Written in collaboration with Dr E. P. Hodgkin.

(2) the river systems of the North-West from the De Grey to the Murchison; (3) the streams, swamps, and lakes of the south-west corner; and (4) the temporary waters of the dry inland represented by two widely different habitats, (i) freshwater claypans and soaks (including man-made dams) and (ii) the salt lakes.

Marked seasonality characterises river flow in the Kimberley Division because of the alternation of regular summer rain with winter drought. The river pools and many isolated springs support an extensive fauna of fish, insects, molluscs and other animals, many of which show close affinities with the aquatic fauna of Asia and the Indo-Malay Archipelago.

The rivers of the North-West from the De Grey to the Murchison flow only intermittently, and between times of flood the fauna must survive in widely separated spring-fed pools in river beds. These pools, like those at Millstream Station on the Fortescue River, are often of striking beauty. Their fauna is relatively sparse as compared with the richer assemblages in the Kimberley rivers, the most conspicuous elements being a few fish species and a freshwater tortoise (*Chelodina steindachneri*) which is confined to the region.

The permanent hill streams of the South-West have a diverse arthropod fauna. Most of these are insects but, in addition, there are several species of freshwater crayfish in slower-running parts—Marron (*Cherax tenuimanus*) occur in permanent streams of deep water; Jilgie (*C. quinquecarinatus*) in shallow permanent water; Koonac (*C. preissi*) make burrows in the mud of swamps. A species of a closely related group, the so-called 'land-crabs' (*Engaewa*), has been recently discovered in the swamps of the South-West. The freshwater mussel *Westralunio carteri* is confined to the streams of the South-West. Most rivers stagnate and may become saline in summer; they are reduced to chains of large or small pools to which the fauna is restricted. The small transparent prawn *Palaemonetes* is often abundant in these pools. Shallow permanent lakes and swamps near the coast also have a fairly varied insect fauna, among which certain species of dragonflies are particularly abundant; at times there are enormous numbers of *Daphnia* and related small crustaceans.

The inland freshwater claypans are characterised by an interesting ephemeral fauna, mainly of phyllopod Crustacea. The most conspicuous is the large shield shrimp (*Triops australiensis*) but a variety of fairy shrimps (Anostraca and Conchostraca) occur also. The eggs of these creatures survive for years in the dried mud and development is rapid when the claypans fill after occasional rains.

The most conspicuous animals in the waters of the salt lakes are the brine shrimps (*Artemia* and *Parartemia*), which at times build up to such high population densities as to attract large flocks of Banded Stilts, which breed only in certain of the inland salt lakes. The Salt Lake Snails *Coxiella* reach their greatest diversity and abundance in the South-West saline lakes.

THE COMPOSITION OF THE FAUNA

The fauna of Western Australia includes representatives of all major phyla of the Animal Kingdom and individuals range in size from the Blue Whale (*Balaenoptera musculus*), the largest mammal that has ever lived, to minute single-celled protozoa which cannot be seen without a microscope. No estimate can be made of the number of species, and probably the number of species of insects alone out-numbers all the rest by a comfortable margin. Here we have not attempted to describe all phyla. The vertebrates are given fairly full treatment because they are obvious and familiar animals to most of us. The insects (mostly those of economic importance) are dealt with in Part 5 of this Chapter, and the remaining phyla are treated in a few paragraphs which confine themselves to groups of interest.

Mammals

Unlike the birds and reptiles, wild mammals are not frequently seen in most parts of Western Australia. This is becuase most of the species are small and secretive and appear

only at night. However, there are exceptions and, as any traveller in inland and northern parts of the State can attest, kangaroos of one species or another can often be seen in large numbers during daylight hours.

Most species of mammals have distinct ecological preferences which allow them to be categorised into one or other of the three main faunal groups which are described earlier in this Part under the heading *Distribution*. For example, in the kangaroo family, the Tammar Wallaby (*Macropus eugenii*), the Quokka (*Setonix brachyurus*), and the Brush Wallaby (*Macropus irma*) are found only in the South-West or on certain isolated islands off the coast. Of these, the Brush Wallaby is closely related to the South Australian Toolache Wallaby (*Macropus greyi*) and the Tammar to the Flinders Island Wallaby and the now extinct St Peter Island Wallaby of South Australia. The most familiar kangaroo of the dry country with unreliable rainfall is the Red Kangaroo or Marloo (*Megaleia rufa*), while in the summer-rainfall country of the Kimberley Division we find such species as the Jungle Kangaroo or River Wallaby (*Macropus agilis*), the Little Rock Wallaby (*Peradorcas concinna*) and the Northern Nail-tailed Wallaby or Karrabul (*Onychogale unguifera*). In addition to the species which sort out in this convenient way, there are others which are widely distributed and in fact occur as members of all three faunal assemblages. The most familiar members of the family which do this are the Euro or Biggada (*Macropus robustus*), the Boodie (*Bettongia lesueur*), and the Rock Wallaby (*Petrogale penicillata*). Of these, the Euro may still be found anywhere in suitable local habitats from the Kimberley to the South-West and inland across the South Australian border. At one time this was true also of the Boodie and the Rock Wallaby which, however, are today unfortunately absent from much of their former range.

So far, only the kangaroos have been mentioned but, in fact, representatives of all three major divisions of the mammals (*i.e.* monotremes, marsupials and placentals) occur in the State.

The egg-laying monotremes are represented by the Echidna (*Tachyglossus aculeata*), sometimes called Spiny Anteater or Porcupine. This curious and completely inoffensive animal is not uncommon in the country around Perth and it even appears on occasions in densely-settled suburban areas. In drier districts, its diggings, made in its search for insects, are familiar around rocky hills and breakaways.

Marsupials, or pouched mammals, occur in great variety in Western Australia. The kangaroos and wallabies, already mentioned, are the herbivorous members of the group. These animals are the Australian evolutionary equivalent of the antelopes, deer, and horses of the other continents and there is often an extraordinary similarity in structure between members of the kangaroo family and these other herbivores. These similarities extend even to such details as the physiology and shape of the stomach and other organs of digestion. The reproductive systems of marsupials and their physiology have also long been of great interest to biologists because they differ from those of other animals. For example, it is now known that in the Quokka, and some other wallabies, the adults mate again immediately after the birth of the 'joey'. The embryo which is the product of this second mating does not develop immediately but is held in a dormant state in the female system. However, if the first young joey is lost from the pouch, this dormant embryo immediately begins to develop and a second joey is produced after a minimum period of time.

In Western Australia the kangaroos and wallabies are all terrestrial (there are no tree kangaroos), and even their arboreal relatives, the phalangerids, are few in number as compared with other parts of Australia. The Brush Possums, the Pigmy Possums and the Ring-tails have Western Australian representatives, but the Koalas and the striped Possums are absent, and of the four species of flying possums of eastern Australia only one (*Petaurus breviceps*) occurs in Western Australia and that only in the Kimberley Division. Although the species of possums in Western Australia are few in number, there are some unique forms which are of great interest. One of these is the rare Scaly-tailed Possum (*Wyulda*) of the Kimberley; unlike other Australian possums this animal has a hairless scaly tail and only twelve specimens of it are known. There is also the curious and rarely-seen

Honey Possum (*Tarsipes*) of the South-West. Wombats are known to have occurred in Western Australia around the turn of the century and were thought to be extinct until a small colony was rediscovered in 1965 near Caiguna in the Eucla Division.

Although the large carnivorous marsupials no longer live in the State, the smaller representatives of this group are still fairly common. There are two separate species of native-cats, a southern species (*Dasyurus geoffroii*) and a northern one (*Dasyurus hallucatus*), as well as many species of smaller carnivorous and insectivorous forms. One of the smaller members of this family, the Dibbler (*Antechinus apicalis*), one of our least-known marsupials and last recorded in 1884, was rediscovered during 1967 at Cheyne Beach near Mount Manypeaks on the south coast.

The remaining group of marsupials is that commonly called the bandicoot family. One of these, the Pig-footed Bandicoot (*Chaeropus ecaudatus*) is probably the State's rarest mammal, but it once occurred in the Nullarbor region where its remains have recently been discovered in caves and two living specimens of it were collected by John Gilbert in 1841 some miles to the north-east of Northam. No confirmed record has been made of the species in Western Australia since then. On the other hand another species of bandicoot, the Quenda, or Short-nosed Bandicoot (*Isoodon obesulus*), is one of the commonest of marsupials. Its scratchings are common in country gardens and the little animal is often run over and found dead on roads. It lives largely on insects and, being nocturnal, it is seldom seen but it is nevertheless very common in many areas in the South-West.

The third main group of mammals is that of the higher mammals or placentals. Animals of this group occur in Western Australia in addition to the marsupials and the monotremes, and it always comes as something of a surprise to visitors (who generally have a strong preconception of Australia as a land in which all but introduced mammals and the Dingo are pouched mammals and monotremes) to learn that there are many species of Western Australian native placental mammals. In fact, if the seals, whales, and Dugong which occur around our coasts be counted, the species of native placental mammals outnumber the marsupial and monotreme species.

The composition of the mammal fauna is shown in the following table.

Kinds of wild mammals	Number of species occurring in Western Australia (*a*)		Kinds of wild mammals	Number of species occurring in Western Australia (*a*)	
Monotremes		1	Introduced placentals—		
Marsupials		60	Rodents	5	
Native placentals—			Land carnivores	2	
Bats	23		Ungulates (Horses, Deer, Camels, etc.)	9	
Rodents	24		Rabbits	1	17
Marine mammals:					
Seals (*b*)	2				
Dugong	1				
Whales	22		TOTAL, ALL SPECIES		151
Land carnivores—Dingo	1	73			

(*a*) Total numbers of species are from *A Guide to the Native Mammals of Australia* by W. D. L. Ride. (*b*) Only resident seals are counted. Antarctic seals are occasionally 'shipwrecked' on southern coasts but these are clearly stragglers into the area.

Within Western Australia the best-established groups of native placental mammals, *i.e.* the bats and rodents, are distributed in much the same ecological manner as are the marsupials; some are dry country forms like *Leggadina hermannsburgensis*, the small mouse which builds mounds of pebbles on stony ridges(3), others are predominantly animals of the wet tropics like the majority of the Fruit-bats or Flying Foxes (*Pteropus*

(3) It is suspected that these may be dew-traps.

and *Macroglossus*), while yet others are confined to the country of reliable winter rainfall in the South-West, *e.g.* the Southern Bush-rat (*Rattus fuscipes*). These native placental mammals are of great zoological interest because some of them, and in particular the native rats and mice, have been here for many millions of years and closely parallel (in adaptation to our stringent ecological conditions) their relatives in similar places in other lands. Thus, we have hopping-mice (*Notomys*), like miniature kangaroos, which are very similar in appearance and habits to the jumping-mice (Zapodidae) of the American and Eurasian dry-lands, and the jerboas (Dipodidae) of Africa; but it must be emphasised that the jumping specialisations of our own hopping-mice have evolved quite independently within Australia.

Some of our native placental mammals are economically important. Until 1963 a shore-based Western Australian fishery at Carnarvon depended upon the migrating groups of Humpback Whales (*Megaptera novaeangliae*) which move along the western coast between their feeding grounds in Antarctic waters and their breeding places in the tropics. Unfortunately, immoderate exploitation of the stocks (especially the breeding stock) had so reduced the population that it was in danger of extermination and the shore-based fishery collapsed. Another whale fishery, at Albany, is dependent upon Sperm Whales (*Physeter catodon*). The catching of Southern Fur-seals (*Arctocephalus doriferus*), formerly lucrative, is now no longer permitted. The Dugong (*Dugong dugon*) was once an important source of food for the natives of the coastline from Shark Bay to the Northern Territory. The Dingo (*Canis familiaris dingo*) has probably not been in Australia for as long as the other native mammals, and may well have entered with the Australoid people who were ancestral to our present Aborigines. In some parts of the State the Dingo is a major problem to the pastoral industry because of its attacks on livestock.

The preceding table also shows that there is a large number of introduced species as well as native mammals. These are now a part of the wild mammal fauna of Western Australia and all are placentals. Some of these species are also agricultural and pastoral pests and they have become so well entrenched in the environment that there is no doubt that any discussion of the mammalian fauna of the State must take them into account and mention should be made of some of them here. Red Deer (*Cervus elephus*) occur spasmodically in the South-West around Pinjarra, Waroona and Harvey. Camels (*Camelus dromedarius*) occur in large numbers and are distributed through the Eastern Goldfields up through the Pilbara and into the Kimberley. They have been declared vermin around Laverton, Nullagine, Port Hedland, and Halls Creek. Donkeys (*Equus asinus*) have a distribution very much like that of the camel and also occur generally throughout the Kimberley. Wild goats (*Capra hircus*) are ubiquitous in dry country but are mainly concentrated in the Murchison and the North-West. A small herd of Black-buck (*Antilope cervicapra*) occurs near Geraldton. Rabbits (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*) are widespread in Western Australia but are only of economic significance south of the Murchison. They are by no means the problem that they used to be, due largely to programmes of intensive rabbit extermination. Foxes (*Vulpes vulpes*), declared vermin, are also widespread but do not commonly occur north of the De Grey River, having only been reported spasmodically from the Kimberley Division. The domestic cat run wild (*Felis catus*) occurs commonly in the bush and is an efficient predator on native fauna. It became feral in the early days of settlement and soon spread throughout the Colony. The naturalist Keartland while a member of the Calvert Scientific Exploring Expedition in 1896, recorded that ' in the desert of North-West Australia ' he saw a tabby cat at least 400 miles [644 kilometres] from the nearest house. Earlier still the ornithologist Tom Carter writing in 1887 from the Carnarvon district spoke of ' the domestic cat, which is found quite wild and of a large size all through the colony '.

Examination of the composition of the older mammal fauna of Western Australia, *i.e.* monotremes, marsupials, bats and native rodents, as set out in the following table, reveals that only one-eighth of all species recorded from the State today appear to occur only in Western Australia. The South-West contains by far the greatest number of endemic species.

ENDEMISM OF NATIVE MAMMALS TO WESTERN AUSTRALIA
(*excluding marine mammals*)

Group	All endemic and non-endemic species	Number of endemic species—			
		Total endemics	Endemics north of Fitzroy River	Endemics of South-West Land Division	Endemics of remainder of State
Monotremes	1	....	....	....	....
Native cats	23	5	1	2	2
Marsupial moles	1	....	....	....	....
Bandicoots	7	....	....	....	....
Possums	8	2	1	1	....
Wombats	1	....	....	....	....
Kangaroos and Wallabies	20	4	....	3	1
Rats	24	3	....	2	1
Bats	23	....	....	....	....
Dingo	1	....	....	....	....
Totals	109	14	2	8	4

Birds

The bird fauna of Western Australia consists of a selection of the species occurring in eastern Australia, with only a very minor development of endemic forms. All of these latter, except one (the Western Australian King Parrot, *Purpureicephalus spurius*), have a close and obvious affinity to other Australian forms. The quantitative relationship of the Western Australian bird fauna to that of Australia as a whole is indicated in the following table, which has been prepared on an ecological basis.

	Number of breeding species		Number of non-breeding visiting migratory species	
	Western Australia	Australia	Western Australia	Australia
Land birds	307	499	6	8
Inland water birds	51	52	33	42
Sea birds	25	38	33	55
Total	383	589	72	105

Representatives of most of the families and genera of Australian birds occur in this State. Notable absentees include the Cassowary (*Casuarius casuarius*), Brush Turkey (*Alectura lathami*), several of the fruit-pigeons, the Crimson Rosella (*Platycercus elegans*), Lyre-bird (*Menura novaehollandiae*), several honeyeaters including the Regent (*Zanthomiza phrygia*), Apostle-bird (*Struthidea cinerea*), Cat-birds (*Ailuroedus*), Satin Bower-bird (*Ptilonorhynchus violaceus*) and Rifle-birds (*Ptiloris*).

Space is insufficient to detail all the forms occurring in Western Australia. Mention may be made only of some distinctive species and groups which are common and widely distributed.

The Emu (*Dromaius novaehollandiae*) is still numerous all over the State and is occasionally encountered in the Darling Range near Perth. Australia's only breeding species of penguin, the Fairy Penguin (*Eudyptula minor*), nests on islands off the southern and south-western coasts as far north as Carnac near Fremantle. The Mallee-fowl or Gnow (*Leipoa ocellata*) is still plentiful and, after a period of decline during which its disappearance was feared, it is now increasing in abundance. All of the widespread

species of Australian quails occur but owing probably to the scarcity of natural grasses in the south are not individually very numerous. Among the pigeons two species have shown notable recoveries in population strength. After a long period of scarcity the Common Bronzewing (*Phaps chalcoptera*) began a cycle of increase about 1936 and is still very abundant. The rare Flock Pigeon (*Histriophaps histrionica*) of the more arid country of the North-West and the far North has declined all over Australia and had not been recorded in this State since 1927 until 1958 when considerable flocks were observed in the Hamersley Range and the Fortescue River country. It has also reappeared in parts of the Kimberley Division.

A very distinctive member of the rail family is the Black-tailed Native Hen or Gallinule (*Tribonyx ventralis*). It is a creature of the drier country but is subject to violent fluctuations in numbers, when it is liable to invade the South-West in great strength. A famous occasion was in May 1833 when it overran the settlers' fields and gardens around Perth and did considerable damage to the crops. Similar irruptions took place in 1853, 1886, 1897 and 1919. Later invasions, such as those in 1952 and 1964, have been on a much more modest scale. Of the three Australian grebes the most plentiful is the Hoary-headed Grebe (*Podiceps poliocephalus*) which assembles in the winter in big flocks on the southern estuaries, including that of the Swan River.

In the petrel group there are five breeding species in local waters. The most numerous is one of the mutton-birds, the Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Puffinus pacificus*) which nests on most islands between Carnac in the south and Sable Island, in the Dampier Archipelago, in the north. A second mutton-bird, the Fleshy-footed Shearwater (*P. carneipes*) nests between Cape Leeuwin and the Archipelago of the Recherche; it is a migratory species and in the winter months migrates to the north-western sector of the Indian Ocean. A similar trans-equatorial migrant is the White-faced Storm-petrel (*Pelagodroma marina*), a diminutive form rarely observed at sea. It nests often in vast aggregations on islands off the south coast and as far north as the Abrolhos. All of these species nest in the spring and summer months. The remaining two breed in the winter. The Great-winged Petrel (*Pterodroma macroptera*) shares the nesting islands off the south coast with the Fleshy-footed Shearwater in a sort of 'Box and Cox' relationship. The black and white Little Shearwater (*Puffinus assimilis*) has a wider nesting range, from the Recherche to as far north as the Abrolhos; in former times it nested at Parrakeet Island off Rottnest Island. In the winter months some twenty-two species of southern-breeding petrels visit local seas. They vary in size from the little Wilson Storm-petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*), barely larger than a swallow, to the great Wandering Albatross (*Diomedea exulans*). The Wilson Storm-petrel 'winters' all along the Western Australian coast to the tropics and is a familiar sight around fishing boats in Shark Bay. The most common of the albatrosses is the Yellow-nosed Albatross (*Diomedea chlororhynchos*) and may be seen as far north as Point Cloates. The most familiar of these visitors is the dusky Giant Petrel (*Macronectes giganteus*). Ringing experiments have demonstrated that the birds seen here are first-year individuals making circumpolar flights round the Southern Hemisphere; marked birds found in the South-West had been ringed a few months previously in their nests at Heard Island, Macquarie Island, and islands in the South Orkneys in the South Atlantic.

All of the five species of Australian cormorants or shags occur locally. Despite complaints of their depredations on commercially important fish, investigations have cleared the birds of blame, though one species, the Black Cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*), specifically identical with the Cormorant of Europe, does occasionally include edible fish in its diet. One marine species, the Pied Cormorant (*P. varius*), which enters the Swan River estuary and Peel Inlet, is mainly responsible for the guano deposits on the coastal islands. Deposits at Shark Bay were commercially exploited in the last century and at one stage, in 1850, a detachment of troops was stationed at The Quoin Bluff, Dirk Hartog Island, to ensure the collection of royalties. Pelicans in Western Australia, unlike those in eastern Australia, breed only on coastal islands and not on inland waters. Until recently the nearest breeding place to Perth, and presumably the origin of most of the Swan River Pelicans, was Pelican Island, Shark Bay. However, since 1962 a breeding colony has become established at Peel Inlet, Mandurah.

Fourteen species of terns are recorded for the southern parts of the State and three more for the Kimberley Division. Three of the seventeen are migrants from the Northern Hemisphere and ringed individuals of the European Common Tern (*Sterna hirundo*) and the Arctic Tern (*S. macrura*), marked in northern Europe, have been recovered near Fremantle. These birds must have reached our coast via the Cape of Good Hope. The Silver Gull (*Larus novaehollandiae*) is noteworthy for having two breeding seasons in the southern part of the State. On the islands at Safety Bay, for example, there is an egg-laying peak in the autumn and another in the spring.

The numerous Order of wading or shore-birds (sandpipers, dotterels, and plovers) includes a few locally-breeding species but the majority are migrants from the Northern Hemisphere, where they breed in the tundra zone of northern Asia. Though they frequent ocean beaches and estuaries, as well as swamps and lakes, they are listed in the category of 'inland water birds' in the table on page 89. Some twenty-five species of these birds, commonly called 'snipe' (though the true Snipe of eastern Australia, *Gallinago hardwickii*, does not occur in this State) migrate to Western Australia. In addition there are sixteen species of this Order which breed in Australia. One of them, the Red-capped Dotterel (*Charadrius alexandrinus*), is virtually identical with the rare Kentish Plover of England. Here it is very common and nests at Pelican Point on the Swan River. Another local breeder is the remarkable Banded Stilt or Rottnest Snipe (*Cladorhynchus leucocephalus*) which is an attractive inhabitant of the salt lakes of Rottnest Island. However, it nests only on the inland salt lakes. The nesting habits remained long unknown until colonies were discovered at Lake Grace and Lake King in 1930.

The Australian Bustard ('Wild Turkey', *Eupodotis australis*) is a magnificent bird which has been largely exterminated by shooters over much of south-eastern Australia and in the developed South-West of this State. It is not uncommon in sparsely-settled areas and individuals occasionally appear on the open coastal country quite near Perth. It has recently been demonstrated by ringing that the Straw-necked Ibis (*Threskionis spinicollis*) ranges between south-western Australia and northern and eastern Australia. Fledglings marked in the nests at Muchea have later been taken in the North-West, the Kimberley Division, Arnhem Land and near Orange (New South Wales).

The Brolga (*Grus rubicunda*) is a northern bird normally found as far south as Onslow, but some individuals may wander into the outer parts of the South-West as occurred in 1952. In the heron family a new bird has been added to the State list—the Cattle Egret (*Bubulcus ibis*), which appears to have colonised northern Australia from Indonesia and has now spread over much of eastern and Western Australia.

There are eighteen species of swans and ducks occurring in the State, one of the most remarkable, perhaps, being the Cape Barren Goose, which is now restricted to the islands of the Recherche Archipelago. Recent leg-ringing experiments have shown that the common and widespread Grey Teal (*Anas gibberifrons*) wanders indiscriminately all over Australia, its movements being influenced by availability of surface waters.

Though the Black Swan (*Cygnus atratus*) occurs all over Australia, and in fact is more plentiful in some of the other States, historical reasons give it a peculiar association with Western Australia. The bird was first recorded by Europeans in this State, by Antonie Caen, skipper of the Dutch ship 'Banda' in July 1636 off the north-west coast. The first specimens were captured on the Swan River by Willem de Vlaming in January 1697 and taken alive to Batavia, whence they astonished the scientific world. Vlaming named the river after them, and the first colonisation in 1829 was known as the Swan River Settlement. The bird became the emblem of the Colony and State, with the motto, *Cygnus insignis*. The birds do not, and probably never did, occur in the broadwaters of the Swan River estuary, but in the shallows at Lucky Bay and above Heirisson Island. During the 1890s the authorities imported birds from elsewhere in the State, and even from Victoria, and set them free, pinioned, in Perth Water, where they were an attraction in Mounts Bay when the old men's home was located near there.

The State is also well provided with hawks and eagles, twenty-four species being found within its limits. Most are harmless economically and the few that do take chickens and lambs are not serious depredators, though there is controversy on the role of the

Wedge-tailed Eagle (*Aquila audax*) which is, however, classified by the Agriculture Protection Board as vermin in certain districts in the central and north-west portions of the State.

There are not as many species of the parrot group in Western Australia as there are in eastern Australia but one species, the Western Australian King Parrot or Red-capped Parrot (*Purpureicephalus spurius*), is restricted to the South-West and has no near relatives elsewhere. The Twentyeight Parrot is a form of the Port Lincoln Parrot (*Barnardius zonarius*) and is common almost everywhere, being regularly present in King's Park, a natural reserve adjacent to the City of Perth.

The Kookaburra (*Dacelo gigas*), so common in the forests of the South-West, is not a Western Australian native but was introduced from eastern Australia by the Acclimatisation Board during January 1897. A similar species, however, the Blue-winged Kookaburra (*D. leachii*) occurs in the north, as far south as the Wooramel River. The Rainbow-bird (*Merops ornatus*) in the south is a strict migrant, arriving regularly in the first week in October. Local birds migrate to the north of the State, the wintering area being from the Gascoyne River northward, but some individuals cross the Timor Sea to the Indonesian islands. There are eleven cuckoo species in our area, the commonest being the Pallid Cuckoo (*Cuculus pallidus*) whose plaintive insistent note is heard soon after the winter rains set in.

In the great group of passerines, or song-birds (Order Passeriformes), the most celebrated is the Noisy Scrub-bird (*Atrichornis clamosus*), a primitive almost-flightless bird which until recently was believed to be the only Australian bird which had become extinct since white settlement. The last specimen was collected by the ornithologist A. J. Campbell at Torbay in 1889, but late in 1961 a surviving population was discovered at Two Peoples Bay east of Albany. Space is insufficient to deal in any detail with other members of this large Order. Throughout the State there are 172 species, of which 95 occur in the southern, settled parts and at least 33 are found in King's Park. A distinctive robin, the White-breasted Robin (*Eopsaltria georgiana*), occurs in the South-West. It is a relative of the yellow robins and is found in the dense coastal and forest thickets from Geraldton southward and east to Albany and the Porongurups. The Western Warbler (*Gerygone fusca*) is a sweet-voiced songster which may be heard in the street trees of Perth, the only Australian capital city in which it lives; in the other States the bird is an inland species. Another distinction of the Perth metropolitan area is that four species of blue-wren, a greater number of species than in the environs of any other capital city, have been noted there. One species, the Red-winged Wren (*Malurus elegans*), which used to live near the city, disappeared when Herdsman Lake was drained. The remaining species are the Splendid Wren (*Malurus splendens*), occasionally still seen in the University grounds; the Blue-and-white Wren (*Malurus leuconotus*) in the coastal dune scrubs, and the Causeway and Pelican Point samphire flats; and the Variegated Wren (*Malurus lamberti*) in the dune thickets. Honeyeaters are numerous, the largest, the Red Wattle-bird (*Anthochaera carunculata*), being a familiar bird in metropolitan streets and gardens. Most of the grassfinches are restricted to the Kimberley Division, where ten species are found. However, one of them, the widespread Zebra Finch (*Taeniopygia castanotis*), nests as near to Perth as Northam and York. Two bower-birds occur in the State. The Great Bower-bird (*Chlamydera nuchalis*) is confined to the Kimberley Division, but the Spotted Bower-bird (*C. maculata*) is found in the North-West and ranges south to the East Murchison country and Malcolm in the Eastern Goldfields.

In contrast with all other Australian States there are very few species of exotic birds established in Western Australia. (The same is true of the Northern Territory.) In the towns of the South-West two turtledoves are plentiful, the Indian (*Streptopelia chinensis*) and the Senegal (*S. senegalensis*). The Goldfinch (*Carduelis carduelis*), an escapee from aviaries, breeds freely in the Perth metropolitan area and around Albany. Recently another cage-bird escapee, the Red-browed Finch (*Aegintha temporalis*), an eastern Australian species, has established itself east of Kalamunda in the Darling Range near Perth. The Indian or Ceylon Crow (*Corvus splendens*) repeatedly arrives at Fremantle on ships from the Orient but the vigilance of officers of the Department of Agriculture and port officials

has led to the successful eradication of the unwanted immigrants. The House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*) has been similarly kept at bay at Fremantle. This species did, however, make a temporary colonisation, from South Australia, in the vicinity of Eucla and Mundrabilla in 1917-18 but it failed to make any headway and disappeared from there.

Reptiles

In Western Australia the reptiles are represented by three major zoological groups or Orders. These are the Chelonia (four marine species of turtles and six of freshwater tortoises), Crocodilia (two of crocodiles) and the Squamata (sixty-two species of snakes and 159 of lizards).

The freshwater tortoises of Western Australia, like those of the rest of the continent, belong to the ancient group of side-necked tortoises. In most other parts of the world tortoises retract their heads straight backwards bending their necks in a vertical S-shaped curve. Australian tortoises, and certain others from South America, bend their necks sideways; this is believed to be an ancient character. Although the species of Western Australian tortoises are few, they are of great interest and their distributions are far from well understood. This is especially true of the species inhabiting the Kimberley. Freshwater tortoises do not seem to fall into simple faunal zone classifications. The common long-necked tortoise of the South-West, *Chelodina oblonga*, is closely related to the long-necked tortoise of the Kimberley Division, *Chelodina rugosa*. However, neither of the short-necked tortoises of the Kimberley Division, *Emydura australis* and *Elseya dentata*, is represented in the South-West. The river systems from the Irwin, in the Northern Agricultural Division to the De Grey in the northern Pilbara, have their own tortoise (*Chelodina steindachneri*), while a highly specialised short-necked tortoise (*Pseudemydura umbrina*) is apparently confined to a few square kilometres of winter swamps between Upper Swan and Bullsbrook to the north of Perth. Because of its vulnerability to extinction this last species is rigidly protected.

Marine chelonians also occur in large numbers around the coasts. The Green Turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), the species which is used for soup making, comes ashore to lay its eggs on the northern beaches. Attempts have been made in the past to exploit this species commercially but it is now protected. However, a non-profit organisation has been granted a licence on behalf of a group of Aborigines in the Kimberley region to take a specified number of eggs and day-old hatchlings. These will be raised by the Aborigines at a commercial Turtle farm at One Arm Point, north of Broome. A certain proportion will be liberated so that the wild stock will not be depleted.

Snakes and lizards are common and widespread throughout the State, and in numbers of obvious individuals they are probably surpassed among the vertebrates only by the birds. In the South-West, Bobtails (*Trachysaurus rugosus*) can often be seen crossing the roads at most times of the year, while the walker among coastal sand dunes on warm days cannot avoid noticing innumerable small dragon-lizards which move away from in front of him. In the southern part of the State the largest lizard which is at all common is the Goanna (*Varanus gouldi*). These are frequently between 0·9 and 1·2 metres in length. In northern areas the Perentie (*Varanus giganteus*) exceeds it in size. A few species are confined to the South-West and of these the most interesting are Mueller's Snake (*Rhinhoplocephalus bicolor*), the Little Brown Snake (*Elapognathus minor*), the Black-Striped Snake (*Vermicella calonota*) and the Slender Snake Lizard (*Pletholax gracilis*) which is also one of our rarest species of lizard. An Eyrean species which never ceases to surprise the visitor is the terrible-looking Mountain Devil (*Moloch horridus*). This lizard is actually one of the most gentle and harmless of animals and lives exclusively on ants.

The snake fauna of the State is diverse and, like that of other parts of Australia, contains many venomous species, the best known being the Tiger Snake (*Notechis scutatus*), the Dugite (*Demansia affinis*), the Gwardar (*D. nuchalis*), the Death Adders (*Acanthophis antarcticus* and *A. pyrrhus*) and the Mulga Snake (*Pseudechis australis*).

The snakes and lizards are well described in Glauert's *Handbook of the Snakes of Western Australia* and *Handbook of the Lizards of Western Australia* (see bibliography at the end of this Part).

Because of the great distance of the Kimberley Division from centres of scientific research, insufficient is known of its snakes and lizards. As in the case of some of the smaller mammals, some endemic species of lizards have been described, but until much more scientific collecting and research has been done it will not be possible to evaluate such apparently-unique species. Some Kimberley species of lizard, *e.g.* the Frilled Lizard (*Chlamydosaurus kingi*), through being commonly illustrated in journals because of their bizarre appearance, have become familiar to the public.

Amphibia[4]

Unlike the other continents Australia has no newts or salamanders (Urodela) or worm-like gymnophionans (Apoda). However, frogs (Anura) are abundant.

The frogs of Western Australia fall into the same grouping (Bassian, Eyrean and Torresian) which was mentioned in the section on mammals. However, they lack the diversity of genera and species shown by other groups and only ten genera with about thirty species are known from south of the Tropic of Capricorn. Of these, two genera, *Metacrinia* and *Myobatrachus*, each with one species, are restricted to the South-West. Most of the other kinds of frogs are distinct from, but related to, species found elsewhere in Australia.

Since most of Western Australia is exceedingly dry it is of interest to note that frogs are common in these arid regions. Those species of *Heleioporus* which occupy marginal desert habitats overcome drought conditions by burrowing into the damp sub-soil. However, the arid-country species of *Neobatrachus* frequent clay soil where deep burrows are impossible and water can be lost. These species show no special capacity to endure greater water loss than *Heleioporus* species, but they do display an exceptional capacity for rapid replacement of water when water is present, as for example after thunderstorms. The water-holding frog, *Cyclorana platycephalus*, is found in inland and northern parts of the State. All 'desert' species retain an aquatic larval life, but this is much shorter than that of species in the well-watered parts of the State. The only species lacking aquatic larval development occur in the wetter South-West; these are *Myobatrachus gouldii*, *Metacrinia nichollsi* and *Crinia rosea*. *Myobatrachus gouldii* is the only species which exhibits any strong dietary preference and eats only termites (Isoptera).

Freshwater Fishes

The truly freshwater fish fauna of the southern part of the State is, by eastern Australian standards, an impoverished one and the species, with the exception of the freshwater catfish ('cobbler'), are diminutive in size. Most of the species are representatives of eastern Australian genera, such as the Pygmy Perch (*Nannoperca vittata*), Mountain Trout (*Galaxias truttaceus*), Black-striped Minnow (*G. pusillus*), and the Native Minnow (*G. occidentalis*). Others are more distinctive, with no near relatives in eastern Australia, such as the Nightfish (*Bostockia porosa*), the King River Perchlet (*Nannatherina balstoni*) and the newly-described scaled galaxiid (*Lepidogalaxias salamandroides*). There are several gobies (*Glossogobius suppositus* and *Lizagobius olorum*) and hardyheads (including *Atherinosoma edelensis*, *A. rockinghamensis*, *A. elongata* and *Craterocephalus cuneiceps*). A lamprey (*Geotria australis*) ascends the rivers to breed and has been recorded north to the Swan River system, but is more abundant in the streams emptying on the south coast. An eel (*Anguilla australis*) has been recorded from the South-West but it is not known whether it is native to the area or has been introduced.

The north-western rivers have a richer fish fauna. The most widespread species is the Spangled Perch (*Therapon unicolor*), a useful food fish which occurs in all rivers south to the Murchison. A large catfish (*Arius australis*) reaching 2·3 kg in weight, occurs in the systems south to the Fortescue. The Rainbow Fish (*Melanotaenia*), popular with aquarists occurs in the river systems of the Pilbara and the Kimberley. The remarkable Blind Gudgeon (*Milyeringa veritas*) and blind eel (*Anommatophasma candidum*) occur in wells and subterranean channels in the North West Cape area. The Kimberley Division has

(4) Written in collaboration with Prof. A. R. Main.

an even larger series of freshwater fishes. These include a catfish (*Neosilurus brevidorsalis*), various Bony Bream (*Nematolosa*), various perch-like fishes (*Therapon*), Gudgeons (*Carrassiops*) and two freshwater saw-fishes (*Pristis clavata* and *Pristiopsis leichhardti*). There is also a freshwater eel (*Anguilla bicolor*) in these far northern waters.

Marine Fishes[5]

The marine fish fauna of Western Australia is probably richer in species than that of any other Australian State. This is because the fishes of the northern part of the State's very long coastline belong to the rich tropical Indo-Pacific fauna, while its southern fauna is a temperate one which includes many elements peculiar to Australian waters. The most up-to-date list of the species of Western Australian fishes, published in 1948, enumerates 740 species, but since that time collecting has revealed about 300 more. Even so, this figure is still far short of the total number which, it is suspected, will eventually be found to be in the neighbourhood of 2,000.

From this it can be seen that there is much to be learnt about fishes of Western Australia but it is probable that only a few of these species are confined to Western Australian waters. At present it seems that most of the fish occurring in the tropical part of the State are widely distributed, and species often range throughout the whole of the tropical Indian and Pacific Oceans, while the species which are found along the south coast usually occur also in the waters of South Australia, Victoria, Tasmania and southern New South Wales.

Between Cape Leeuwin and Shark Bay both northern and southern elements are found, the tropical element dominating as far south as the Houtman Abrolhos.

In addition to the widely-distributed tropical and southern elements, there are a number of species, between thirty and forty, which seem to be peculiar to Western Australia. It is necessary to be cautious here for two reasons. Firstly, because the Indo-Pacific fish fauna is, as a whole, poorly known and some fishes, at present only recorded from Western Australia, may actually have wider ranges. Secondly, our classification of fishes is still imperfect so that fishes which we regard as endemic to Western Australia may be known from some other region, but under different names. On the other hand there can be no doubt that at least a proportion of these species which we now believe to be endemic will prove to be confined to Western Australian waters.

In the following very incomplete review, a number of the more important and interesting families and species are listed.

Of the major groups, the Elasmobranchii (sharks and rays) are richly represented, with nearly eighty species, of which the most familiar are the Port Jackson Shark (*Heterodontus portusjacksoni*), the Carpet Shark or Wobbegong (*Orectolobus maculatus*) and the shark known locally as the Swan River Whaler (*Carcharhinus leucas*), which can be caught in the Swan River as far upstream as the Garratt Road Bridge. It occurs during the summer months and one non-fatal attack in the Swan River has been attributed to this species. The Port Jackson Shark, the Carpet Shark and the Swan River Whaler are regarded as harmless to man; of the dangerous species, the Tiger, the Whaler and the White Pointer are perhaps the best known. Four fatalities from shark attack have been recorded for Western Australia (in 1803, 1923, 1925 and 1967) and a few people are known to have been maimed. It may be said, however, that in Western Australia the danger of shark attack is low.

Most major families of bony fishes are represented, but only a number of the more interesting or familiar species can be mentioned here.

There are about ten species of true herring (Clupeidae), one of which, the Pilchard (*Sardinops neopilchardus*) will in future probably become of economic importance. The rather similar-looking *Amblygaster postera* seems to be confined to Western Australia. The State is particularly rich in sea-horses and pipe fishes, there being some twenty-five species. The most familiar of these is perhaps the leafy sea-horse (*Phyllopteryx foliatus*)

[5] Contributed by Dr G. F. Mees.

which is often found on the beaches after storms. The so-called Sand Shark or Rat Fish (*Gonorhynchus greyi*), a peculiar fish and the sole representative of its family, deserves mention; it is fairly common off sandy coasts of the South-West. Though eels are represented by several families and over twenty species, only three are common in the South-West; the Snake Eel (*Ophisurus serpens*), a slender golden brown eel inhabiting sandy estuaries, which is often taken for a snake and referred to as the water snake; Woodward's Eel (*Gymnothorax woodwardi*), found on rocky shores, yellowish green with a network of grey lines; and the Conger Eel (*Conger wilsoni*), which normally is dark brown in colour.

Garfishes (Hemiramphidae) are common. Of their relatives the Long Toms (Belonidae), only *Belone ciconia* is common in the South-West, the others being more tropical in distribution, though one of the northern species, *Belone hians*, has been found as far south as Rottnest Island.

Silversides and hardyheads (Atherinidae) are well represented and so are mullets (Mugilidae). Some representatives of these groups have been mentioned in the preceding section, which deals with freshwater fishes.

The family Serranidae, known as gropers, rock cod, etc. are represented by nearly thirty species. The best known is the North-west Groper (*Epinephelus tauvina*) which attains a length of more than two metres. Most species have a very wide, mainly tropical, distribution, but *Epinephelus rankini* is only known from a restricted area round Onslow and must be looked upon as endemic to Western Australia. In temperate waters the preceding family is more or less replaced by the related Hypoplectrodidae.

Some small families, like the Australian Salmon (Arripidae), Whiting (Sillaginidae) and Snappers (Sparidae) are of great economic importance, though there are only a few species. On the other hand the Skipjacks (Carangidae) are one of the largest families of the State and comprise some thirty species. Another group which are also called Snappers (Lutjanidae) is prominent in the tropical part of the State. These are often referred to as North-west Snappers and should not be confused with the southern Snapper (*Chrysophrys unicolor*) which belongs to the Sparidae.

Coral fishes (Chaetodontidae) are richly represented, mainly along reefs in the tropics, but a number of species come down to the Houtman Abrolhos, and some even near to Perth. Most species have a very wide distribution in the Indo-Pacific, but one, *Chaetodon assarius*, has not been found outside Western Australia.

The Mackerel family (Scombridae), which includes mackerel, Spanish mackerel, tuna, bonito and albacore, is important both in tropical and temperate waters. The related marlins and swordfishes, well known to sporting fishermen, also occur in these waters.

Flatfishes (Heterosomata) occur in a great variety of species, and the same can be said of Parrotfishes and Wrasses (Scaridae and Labridae). All these groups are as yet very insufficiently known.

The stargazers and stonelifters are sluggish bottom fishes that deserve mention because of their unusual shape. One, *Ichthyscopus barbatus*, occurs off the south-west coast and also in South Australia, and is regularly caught by anglers. Another species, *Ichthyscopus insperatus*, a common fish of the north-west coast from Broome to Shark Bay, seems to be confined to Western Australia. The dragonets (Callionymidae), of which nine species have been recorded, are smaller, but their pretty appearance attracts attention, and one species, *Dactylopus dactylopus*, widely distributed in the Indo-Pacific, is regularly found off sandy beaches as far south as Rockingham.

Blennies (Blenniidae), weedfish (Clinidae), and gobies (Gobiidae) are small fishes of which there are many species; blennies are most plentiful in rockpools and on reefs in the tropics, while gobies are also found on sandy bottoms.

There are some twenty species of scorpion fishes known from the State, the most familiar of which are *Scorpaena sumptuosa* in the south, and the small *Scorpaena bynoensis* in the north; the first-mentioned species is also interesting in that, though it has been known for almost a century, it has never been recorded from outside Western Australia.