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Recreational Fishing and Fisheries Management: a HMAP Asia Project Paper

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the history of recreational fishing and its influence on the development of fisheries management in Western Australia in the first half of the twentieth century. Based on research completed in 2002, the paper outlines the origins and development of recreational fishing and examines the growing influence of recreational fishing over management policies and practises during this period, an influence that diminished after the Second World War as a consequence of the rise of a new management paradigm based on the science of marine biology. This research is part of a larger project concerned with the historical impact of recreational fishing on the decline and recovery of marine animal populations.

INTRODUCTION: ORIGINS OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The management of fisheries resources in Western Australia commenced on January 1, 1890, when the *Fishery Act 1889* came into effect.¹ Henceforth, commercial and recreational fishers alike were required to observe a schedule of minimum weights by which twenty-two species of fish could legally be kept. For the most part, however, the new legislation pertained only to commercial fishing, and more particularly, to professional netting operations in tidal rivers, estuaries, and inlets. Under the *Fishery Act* the emptying of nets onto dry land became an offence, and the government was empowered to regulate the legal dimensions of nets, to fix closed seasons on the taking of any prescribed species, and to declare the limits within any 'river, creek, stream, estuary, or other inlet of the sea' where net or 'fixed engine' fishing would be prohibited.²

Modelled on a Victorian statute, the *Fishery Act* was introduced by the Western Australian Parliament in response to concerns over the declining yields of professional fishers during the late 1880's.³ Like the statutes of other colonies, the Act reflected contemporary scientific knowledge on marine biology. Naturalists around Australia had long been aware that the protected waters of estuaries and inlets were the habitats, either permanently or seasonally, of many popular eating and sporting species, formed the breeding grounds where adult fish spawned, and provided sanctuaries in which juvenile fishes matured.⁴ These same naturalists also believed that the long-term future of commercial fishing was contingent upon fish reaching sexual maturity and reproducing before being caught.⁵ The minimum weights outlined in fisheries legislation were thus set at sizes believed to be those of adult fish; the dimensions of nets were likewise designed to enable the escape of juveniles; closed waters and seasons were imposed to allow fish free access to and from breeding grounds, and protection during spawning periods; and the dragging and emptying of nets onto land was outlawed to ensure undersized and unwanted fish could be returned to the water alive.⁶

In 1893, the responsibility of formulating and enforcing fisheries regulations was vested in a newly formed Fisheries sub-department, existing as part of the Department of the Commissioner for Crown Lands.⁷ Similar to the other resource management agencies created in this period, the new Fisheries Department received only meagre funding.⁸ During the 1890's only eight officers and a Chief Inspector were appointed by the Government, row-boats and bicycles marked the extent of equipment supplied, and tasks of policing the colony's Game Act and pearl shell industry were also seconded to the Department.⁹ The potential for effective fisheries management was thus limited, and the Department's troubles

were made all the worse by the attitudes and practices prevailing within the industry. In the world of commercial fishing regulatory breeches had become traditional the moment regulations were invented, and the professional fishers of Western Australia reacted to the restrictions passed under the *Fishery Act* with customary recalcitrance and skulduggery. Within years poaching and the use of undersized nets were established practises throughout the colony, fisheries officers were viewed with outright contempt, and efficient ‘bush telegraph’ systems had been developed to warn law-breakers of impending inspection.¹⁰ Reports from the 1890’s and beyond suggest that the worst offenders came from the ranks of Greek and Italian migrants, who together constituted a significant proportion of those employed in commercial fishing.¹¹ Ethnically different, and living on the margins of mainstream society, these ‘foreigners’ were generally held by the wider public to be responsible for most things wrong with commercial fishing in Western Australia; sometimes no doubt unfairly, on other occasions, probably not.¹²

The 1890’s was also a time of great expansion in the fishing industry of Western Australia. The rapid economic and demographic growth of this decade created increasing demand for fish as food, and with improvements in transport and refrigeration occurring during the same years, ‘a fishing boom’ was soon underway. Numbers employed as professional fishers quickly rose to unprecedented levels, and operations moved beyond the waters of Fremantle, Rockingham and Mandurah into other estuaries and inlets along the south-west and southern coasts, where fish could be caught in relative abundance, and with a minimum investment of capital.¹³ Proceeding at a pace that far exceeded the Departments capacities of supervision and control, this dramatic expansion of commercial fishing was nevertheless welcomed by the colony’s policy makers.¹⁴ As a foodstuff, fish was valued for both culinary and nutritional qualities, and throughout the 1890’s vast quantities of the canned product was annually imported into the colony.¹⁵ Moreover, the tremendous enthusiasm for the development of natural resources characteristic of this era applied to fisheries as much as any other primary industry,¹⁶ and as such, any attempt to increase supplies to local markets invariably received strong public and political support.

The economic and social change of the 1890’s had also produced a fishing boom of a different kind. Angling, of course, had always been a favourite pastime amongst the European colonists, and from the late nineteenth century on population growth, improving transportation and greater leisure time led the sport to experience a surge in popularity.¹⁷ For people in the metropolitan area, the Swan Estuary, the beaches and inshore waters, and Rottnest and Garden Islands remained as favourite locations for recreational fishing, and at

the same time, new options for anglers were being created.¹⁸ By the end of the decade an infant tourism industry, based around estuary and inshore angling and catering to visitors from the city, the goldfields and the inland farming districts, had emerged in the 'seaside resorts' of Rockingham, Mandurah, Bunbury, and Albany.¹⁹ At all these places fish like black bream, whiting, mulloway, tailor, herring, flathead, flounder, and even skippy and schnapper, could be caught with ease, and with the simplest of tackle; hooks, sinkers and lines, rods and reels, and lures and bait.²⁰

In 1896, the growing popularity of recreational fishing was revealed in the formation of two angling associations. The first, the West Australian Piscatorial Society, has obscure origins. Professing to have existed 'for some time' prior to 1896, the Piscatorial Society appeared in public in September of this year to boast an influential, high profile membership, and to 'establish its claim as the premier club of its kind in the colony'.²¹ The rival association, the West Australian Angling Club and Fish Protection Society, had been formed in Perth at the beginning of the same month.²² Seeking to model itself on a long established and successful Victorian association, the Angling Club adopted the objectives of organising outings and competitions, encouraging greater public involvement in the sport, 'the collection of reliable information on piscatorial subjects', and 'the protection of fish'.²³ With objectives and memberships such as these, the Angling Club and Piscatorial Society may be viewed in a similar light to groups like the Western Australian Natural History Society, an organisation formed by the colony's social and political elite in 1891 to advance knowledge of, and seek improved conservation for, the flora and fauna of Western Australia.²⁴ In subsequent years both associations were to function as leading representatives of the angling community in conflicts over fisheries management.

A number of anglers in the 1890's seemingly regarded their pastime as an age-old and 'gentle art', where an individual was afforded the opportunity of testing skills and patience against a cunning and beguiling aquatic adversary.²⁵ With an eagerness bordering on obsession, these same types of anglers were to spend the next half-century pursuing the goal of acclimatising fresh-water fish, mainly trout, into the streams, rivers and lakes of the south-west corner of the State.²⁶ However, the majority of anglers clearly adopted a less serious attitude, and instead enjoyed their pastime for providing them with the company of friends, the experience of marine environments, and the fun associated with catching large numbers of big fish.²⁷ After capture, fish were killed and kept as trophies or as food to be taken home and eaten, preserved, given away, or thrown away.²⁸ Kudos went to the angler with the most

fish, the biggest fish, or whoever could tell the best tales about former adventures and glories.²⁹

By the standards of a century later, the catches obtained in the late 1890's and early 1900's are unbelievably good. Yet to anglers at the time, fish appear to have never been too numerous. Perhaps inevitably, people began realising that their catches were no longer as impressive as memory suggested they once had been, and by the end of the 1890's, a perception of less fish than before was starting to emerge.³⁰ Historians of angling in Eastern Australia, observing a similar perception developing around this time, have pointed to two important consequences: the adoption of more 'sporting methods' and concerns for 'fair play' by anglers seeking fish; and the initiation of efforts to promote the interests of recreational fishers at governmental level.³¹ In Western Australia, however, examples of changing attitudes are difficult to find, with most anglers continuing to catch and keep as many fish as possible, and to brag about it afterwards. What can be found are the first signs of dissatisfaction with the management of fisheries in estuaries and inlets, where fish tended to congregate, anglers and professionals fished in close proximity, and the potential for controversy was greatest.³² As the twentieth century began, the foundation for conflict was therefore in place.

'I REGARD THE CONSERVATION OF FISH IN THIS STATE AS HAVING BEEN NEGLECTED': ANGLING BECOMES A FACTOR IN THE MANAGEMENT OF FISHERIES

In 1898, the growing popularity of angling in Western Australia received official recognition. Reporting to Parliament on the 'Marine Fisheries of the South and South-Western Coasts',³³ L. Thompson, Chief Inspector of Fisheries, made the following remarks about future management policies for the Swan Estuary:

It does not, however, follow that because these rivers seem to be subject to obstacles in the way of fish propagation that their resources, however circumscribed they may be, should not be conserved as far as possible. Besides, although it may be beyond present expectation that they will yield permanent employment to a reasonable number of professional fishermen, yet they undoubtedly offer to amateur line-men and anglers a splendid field for recreation and amusement; and in designing provisions for the regulation of these fisheries it is only equitable that the needs and interests of the numerous classes whose advocations compel them to a sedentary life in the city and the suburbs, and in Fremantle also, should have consideration, and especially so when it can be given without unduly interfering with the rights which the professional fisherman may be disposed to claim as inherently his own.³⁴

Thompson's pessimistic assessment of the estuary's resources was based on a belief that heavy river and harbour traffic was scaring fish out to sea.³⁵ Clearly, he also believed that angling was not in conflict with commercial operations, and could thus recommend that the estuary be managed in interests of both forms of fishing.³⁶ Elsewhere around the colony, Thompson noted that whilst restrictions had already been applied to most commercial fisheries, the prevalence of poaching posed a serious threat to long term sustainability.³⁷ To deal with this problem the report urged that inspectors be equipped with more efficient means of transport, and that existing legislation be amended to allow the Department greater scope for controlling the industry.³⁸ Thompson also suggested that the waters of Peel Inlet and Leschenault Estuary closed to net fishing be temporarily increased, in order to allow depleted stocks a chance to recover.³⁹

A new fisheries bill was placed before Parliament a year later. The proposed amendments included an extension of regulatory powers to the open ocean, the introduction of a licensing system for commercial fishers and fishing boats, greater powers for the Department to board vessels and enter premises in the search of illegal equipment or undersized fish, and a provision for the appointment of volunteer or 'honorary' inspectors.⁴⁰ As debate on the bill progressed, it became clear that the destruction of undersized and unwanted fish had been a feature of commercial fishing in the colony for a number of years.⁴¹ Considerable frustration was expressed at this 'immense, wicked and reckless waste' of 'good, wholesome food'; most of the blame for the resultant depletion of resources was directed towards Greek and Italian fishers, who were additionally suspected of colluding with fishmongers and hawkers to form a 'fish ring', whereby supply to the public was kept artificially low, and prices artificially high.⁴² Some Members also attributed the scarcity of fish to the outrages committed by fish-eating birds, and especially the roundly despised cormorant, or shag.⁴³ A clause allowing for the culling of these birds received universal approval.⁴⁴

Support for the proposed legislation came from all sides of Parliament. Some of the bill's leading advocates were Members with hobbies as anglers, and although G. Throssell, the Commissioner for Crown Lands, used his influence to defeat a motion calling for an extension of licensing to amateur netting so as to not encroach upon the rights of annual holidaymakers, not a single speaker said anything to suggest that recreational fishers had come into conflict with their professional counterparts.⁴⁵ Indeed, one of Parliament's most experienced anglers, F.M. Stone, was also the bill's leading critic. Although broadly

supporting the goal of improving fisheries conservation, Stone thought the amendments had been hastily prepared, and should therefore be withdrawn.⁴⁶ He argued that better supervision of existing regulations would eliminate the problem of illegal fishing, and pointed to other factors contributing to the depletion of fish stocks, such as the increasing numbers of 'porpoises', or dolphins, that had been observed feeding in the Swan Estuary since the harbour at Fremantle had been opened up.⁴⁷ However, Stone's objections were not repeated, and the *Fisheries Act 1899* was passed by Parliament.

The goodwill expressed during 1898 and 1899 was not to last much longer. In October 1900 Western Australia's new Chief Inspector of Fisheries, C. Gale, visited Bunbury with a view to relaxing the ban on netting in Leschenault estuary, declared in the aftermath of Thompson's report to afford depleted stocks time to recover.⁴⁸ News of the Chief Inspector's intentions preceded his arrival, leaving the townspeople time to organise a public meeting to discuss the proposal.⁴⁹ The ban, it seemed, had coincided with a period of improved recreational fishing in the estuary, and Bunbury's anglers, not wishing to have their 'good sport' imperilled by any changes to policy, began preparing for a showdown with the Chief Inspector.⁵⁰ A decisive moment in management of Western Australia's fisheries was about to occur.

The meeting, held in a local hotel, was chaired a Mr. T. Hayward, president of the local Chamber of Commerce and 'one of the most enthusiastic fishermen in the district'.⁵¹ Guest speaker was E.M. Clarke, Mayor of Bunbury and an equally enthusiastic angler.⁵² Judging by the favourable support given to the anglers' campaign in the local press, one can only assume that the editor of the *Southern Times* shared a similar predilection.⁵³ Hayward opened proceedings by suggesting that a resumption of netting would ruin angling in the estuary, and thereby posed a risk to the tourism industry.⁵⁴ The Mayor then delivered his address:

This was a question which did not concern the townspeople only but the visitors.(Cheers.) It affected everybody, not alone any one section of the community...There were many working men in the district who liked to take a rod and line and go in for fishing, not net fishing.(Cheers.) [Clarke] was one of the first who moved for the closing of the estuary. The result was that an imaginary line was drawn...and above that line net fishing was allowed. But if anyone told [Clarke] that the net fishers did not confine themselves to restricted waters, but fished all over the rivers and the Estuary, well, [Clarke] would believe them.(Cheers and laughter)...Splendid catches were now being made every day and in all parts of the Estuary. That could not be done last year.(Cheers.) [Clarke] was in favour of further closing the Estuary against net fishing.(Loud cheers.)⁵⁵

A succession of local hoteliers spoke after the Mayor. They also argued that fishing in the estuary attracted many visitors to the town, that its removal would harm the tourist trade, and that net fishers could not be trusted to obey more moderate restrictions.⁵⁶ Some went further, identifying the commercial fishers thought to be chiefly responsible for illegal fishing.⁵⁷ Although some of these fishers turned up to refute the more serious allegations levelled against them, it fell to Gale to make a case for re-opening the estuary. He pointed out that the southern portion of the estuary, along with the Collie and Preston rivers, would always be protected as breeding grounds and sanctuaries, but reasoned that the northern portion should be opened to supply fish to the consumers of Bunbury and surrounding districts.⁵⁸ However, the Chief Inspector's arguments went entirely unheeded, and a resolution supporting a continuation of the ban was passed with ease.⁵⁹ Seizing the initiative, Clarke departed on the next train to Perth, where he delivered news of the town's decision to G. Throssell, still the Commissioner for Crown Lands, and the Minister with whom ultimate authority on the matter lay.⁶⁰ Back in Bunbury, the *Southern Times* maintained the rage against net fishing in the estuary:

Here we all know what has happened in the past, and feel confident that if the net fisher were to ply his calling...as of yore the old practices will be resorted to. It has been said on all sides that fish were not always netted in the area restricted to netting, and although it is not right to take away any man's character merely because rumour says something, still where there is smoke there must be fire...It is undeniable that the closure of the Estuary...has increased the number of fish of all kinds...far beyond the wildest dreams of those who advocated the abolition of net fishing...The fact cannot be denied that when net fishing was in full swing anglers could hardly get a nibble in a week, and that townspeople might go on their knees to the fish hawkers to beg for a mouthful of fish, and they had no hope of getting it...But the good folk of Bunbury are not going to put up with that sort of thing again.⁶¹

Within a week another public meeting had been held, a petition opposing the Chief Inspector's proposal had been signed by close to 400 people, a second, formal deputation to the Minister was planning departure, the Chamber of Commerce had professed wholehearted support, and fundraising for a long-running campaign was underway.⁶²

Faced with a groundswell of popular support, the Government responded. Days after the Mayor's visit to Perth, Throssell telegraphed Clarke to announce that in the interests of democracy and the tourism industry Leschenault estuary would be closed to nets for a further twelve months.⁶³ The anglers of Bunbury were thus triumphant, and their victory symbolised more than just the promise of continued good sport. Their campaign against the Chief

Inspector's proposal, arising from a belief that netting in estuaries threatened recreational fish stocks, had succeeded in challenging established approaches to fisheries management. Success had come through a combination of extensive media coverage, significant public involvement, strong economic links between angling and holiday-making, the poor reputation of professional fishers, the support of business groups and local politicians, and finally, a sympathetic colonial Government. By acceding to the anglers' request, the Government had acknowledged the validity of claims for changes to policy based on an assumption of direct competition over limited resources. The precedent set was remarkable.

Three years later, a new precedent was established. In May 1903, Thompson's Bay, Rottnest Island, was declared closed to net fishing on the advice of W. Kingsmill, the Colonial Secretary and an angling enthusiast, in order to 'add to the island's attractions'. Kingsmill's decision was made against the wishes of the Chief Inspector, who opposed the closure of open-ocean waters on the grounds that such measures served to protect neither breeding grounds nor juvenile fishes.⁶⁴ In the years and decades to come, this pattern of political influence overruling Departmental opposition to the closure of ocean waters was repeated on numerous occasions, most notably at Rockingham and Safety Bay, and the beaches of the metropolitan area.⁶⁵ For the most part, however, estuaries and inlets, rather than the open sea, remained as the leading source of conflicts over fisheries management.

The next of these conflicts commenced towards the end of 1904. First in December, and again in April and May of 1905, a series of letters from disgruntled anglers appeared in the pages of the *West Australian*. One after another, these letters called for an end to commercial net fishing in the Swan Estuary.⁶⁶ Since Thompson's report of 1898, waters closed to net fishing had been increased, but commercial operations continued in the open portions of the estuary.⁶⁷ This netting, it was now contended, had caused fish to become scarce, and recreational fishing less fruitful.⁶⁸ Professional fishers had been observed killing vast numbers of immature fish, and one correspondent even thought that the practice of dragging nets along the seabed was causing damage to breeding grounds.⁶⁹ Poaching, especially by 'foreigners', was suspected to be rife.⁷⁰ As such, further restrictions were deemed unlikely to afford adequate conservation to fish stocks, leaving a total ban as the only option for preventing the 'imminent destruction' of an 'anglers paradise'.⁷¹ This ban, the anglers claimed, would uphold the wider public interest by saving the estuary for seekers of recreation, and leaving the ocean a preserve for professional fishers.⁷²

During November 1905 more letters on fisheries management began appearing in the *West Australian*.⁷³ On this occasion, however, a different perspective was put forward. These

latest correspondents, purporting to be either misrepresented professionals or impartial observers, argued that netting had not harmed the estuary's fish stocks at all. The fish were all still there, but could only be found in the 'new haunts' they occupied to escape the 'commotion' of heavy river traffic.⁷⁴ Contrary to the allegations of anglers, most fishers were 'Britishers', and therefore hardworking and trustworthy, with illegal practices committed by a small minority of unlicensed individuals.⁷⁵ The estuary, the letters suggested, contained resources sufficiently large and varied to allow for sharing between commercial and recreational users. Then, in December, two more letters appeared.⁷⁶ Together, these letters attacked anglers for being ignorant, selfish, and privileged with excessive leisure time and political over-representation. The public was reminded that professional fishers supplied fish to consumers, paid taxes in the form of licenses, and had worked on the estuary for generations.⁷⁷ But rather than seeking to refute the claims of anglers, this last pair of letters aimed at attracting the sympathy of those engaged in a more important debate on fisheries management. Late in 1905 a new fisheries bill had been placed before parliament, and professional fishers of Western Australia were starting to worry.⁷⁸

The bill, modelled on recently-passed New South Wales legislation, promised to dramatically expand controls over the fishing industry.⁷⁹ Introduced first to the Legislative Council, the bill met with instant approval from E.M. Clarke, who had been elected to Parliament in 1901.⁸⁰ Clarke drew heavily on his experiences in Bunbury to urge support for the measures:

Nearly every clause in the bill meets with my entire approval. I will, however, take the opportunity of saying that I look upon the conservation of fisheries in our state as having been neglected. I remember, as a young fellow, the time when we could get more fish than we wanted in the South West district...and I know schnapper were then very numerous in the Preston River. Now, however, you may fish all day in that river and not catch one schnapper. To show how soon these fish will increase under a system of protection, I may mention that the fisheries at Bunbury were closed against net fishing for several years, and before two years...the fish began to again increase, while in the third year they were again getting plentiful...Notwithstanding what the fishermen say, the fishing waters along this coast are very limited.⁸¹

Having passed through the Upper House with ease, debate moved on to the Legislative Assembly, where another expert on the management of fisheries emerged. A.J. Diamond, the Member for South Fremantle, had been an honorary inspector of fisheries for several years and a keen angler for longer,⁸² and like Clarke drew upon his experience when speaking in the bill's favour.⁸³ Other members, less concerned with the interests of recreational fishers, were nevertheless equally supportive of the proposed legislation. The decline in fish stocks

over preceding years was widely assumed to be severe, professional fishers, foreigners especially, were strongly disparaged for their frequent abuses and law-breakings, and the supply of fresh seafood available to the public was generally thought to leave much to be desired.⁸⁴ Amazingly, not a single criticism of the bill was raised, and in a matter of days, a new *Fisheries Act* had been added to the statute books of Western Australia.

The *Fisheries Act 1905*, which was not to be repealed for a further eighty-nine years,⁸⁵ provided the Government and Department with an enormous scope for managing fisheries resources. Substantial new powers of regulation, inspection and arrest were granted to the Department, a number of open-ended clauses for restricting all forms of fishing were introduced, and penalties for illegal fishing were raised.⁸⁶ In one respect, the Act represented the culmination of a decade and a half of rapid expansion in commercial fishing, and the accompanying difficulties of supervision and control. At the same time, however, important developments had occurred in recreational fishing in Western Australia, and the Act reflected these changes as well. The official recognition of angling's growing popularity in the late 1890's had been soon followed by clear signs of an emerging conflict of interests between professional and recreational fishers. Driven by a sense of competition for dwindling resources, anglers in Bunbury, and later in the metropolitan area, began seeking to both realise and extend their potential for influencing policies and approaches to fisheries management. Their public campaigns positioned fisheries management as a subject of social controversy, and had the effect of reinforcing perceptions of declining fish stocks, highlighting inadequacies in existing policies, inflaming existing prejudices towards professional fishers, and affirming the rights of anglers to access to fishery resources. By 1905, then, a need for greatly extending legislative controls over commercial fishing was widely accepted in the Western Australian Parliament, and supporters of angling like Diamond and Clarke went entirely unchallenged in claiming for recreational fishers a stake in the management of fisheries. In only the space of a few years, anglers had thus acquired considerable influence; in the years to come, their influence was not to remain undisputed.

Elaborate Descriptions of Generative Processes: Consolidation of Recreational Fishing's Influence

The *Fisheries Act 1905* failed to achieve the desired outcomes. No appreciable increase in the quantity or quality of fish was made available for the consuming public. Law-abiding professional fishers faced only the possibility of further, crippling controls over their operations, whilst rogue fishers, foreign or otherwise, carried on as if nothing had happened.

The Fisheries Department remained too small and too poorly equipped to adequately police the rules and regulations pertaining to the industry.⁸⁷ And for the anglers of Western Australia, the spectre of netters killing large numbers of fish and frightening away the rest remained a continuing source of anguish.⁸⁸

One result of the Act, however, was to instil a sense of hardship and persecution amongst professional fishers. Deputations began waiting on the government to ask for the removal of restrictions on netting in estuaries, and efforts at attracting broader public sympathy for the fishers' plight continued throughout 1906.⁸⁹ The industry's grievances were well captured in a July letter to the *West Australian* from J.S. Shaw, one of the more articulate spokespersons for commercial fishing.⁹⁰ According to Shaw, recent changes in fisheries management had resulted in the unfair and unnecessary oppression of those employed in the industry, and these changes could be attributed to a single cause. The new legislation, he suggested, had been passed solely 'to secure enhanced sporting privileges for a socially select few', with a similar explanation being offered for the extent of closed waters on Swan Estuary:

I would like to point out that this measure is manifestly less in the assumed interests of the general public than in response to the political 'pull' of a numerically insignificant, but socially very potent body of alleged anglers, who have thus managed to secure practically all the most accessible waters as private preserves, and maintained at the public expense.⁹¹

Clearly, professional fishers were starting to assume that their own interests were threatened by the new-found influence of angling, and to respond accordingly. The management of fisheries in Western Australia had suddenly become more controversial than ever.

Against this backdrop of general dissatisfaction the West Australian government appointed a Joint Select Committee of Parliament to inquire into the fishing industry.⁹² The inquiry was instructed to focus on fish marketing and pricing and 'the causes debarring persons of British origin from engaging in the industry', but with the anglers E.M. Clarke and W. Kingsmill included on the six member Committee, an opportunity existed for testing the beliefs and opinions of recreational fishers against those of commercial operators and Departmental officials.⁹³ First to give evidence was Gale, the Chief Inspector of Fisheries. Gale confirmed the Committee's suspicions about widespread poaching by professionals, the destruction of immature and unwanted fish in commercial nets, and the recent declines of resources in the Swan estuary.⁹⁴ Yet when asked to expand upon these observations, the Chief Inspector gave responses that contradicted much of what anglers had claimed in

previous years. Gale stated that falling hook and line catches were a result of fish 'realising' that they were being caught, and moving to new habitats to escape the continual 'harassment'.⁹⁵ Furthermore, concerns over the killing of fish as by-catch from netting operations was dismissed with the view that the simultaneous extermination of carnivorous 'vermin' such as sharks and rays counterbalanced the loss of more desirable species.⁹⁶ The evidence of A. Abjornssen, another senior fisheries inspector, was also a challenge to the views previously expressed by anglers. Abjornssen contended that all fish in the estuary were migratory, meaning that stocks were yearly replenished by the 'inexhaustible' supplies of the ocean, and hence that restrictions on netting served no conservation purpose whatsoever.⁹⁷

A succession of commercial fishers were the next to give evidence. They also spoke of recent declines in catches, but like the fisheries officers offered explanations that challenged those previously put forward by the angling community. The fact that fish populations fluctuate naturally from season to season was referred to; and changes in the estuarine environment from the increasing flow of saltwater through the recently opened-up harbour, the silting up of rivers from dredging operations, and the ploughing of flood plains were also put forward as possible explanations.⁹⁸ But the leading iconoclast at the Inquiry was undoubtedly F.M. Stone, since retired from politics and the only witness to speak on behalf of recreational fishers. Stone told the Committee that as anglers and netters targeted different species, their interests were entirely compatible.⁹⁹ Declining catches, he stated, could be attributed to heavy river and harbour traffic frightening fish out to sea, to increasing levels of pollution, to the ravages of 'porpoises' and fish-eating birds, and in perhaps the ultimate heresy, to the vast numbers of fish taken by the anglers themselves.¹⁰⁰ Stone concluded by agreeing that closed waters on netting did not protect fish stocks, but instead functioned only as 'sentimental' reserves for recreational fishers.¹⁰¹

With the hearing of evidence completed, the Select Committee reported back to parliament. Finding that existing regulations had dubious value as measures of conservation, and that poaching and the use of undersized nets were common, the Committee made the practical recommendations that restrictions on commercial net fishing be loosened, and the area of closed waters reduced.¹⁰² However, any chance that the angling community might accept these recommendations, or the thinking that lay behind them, was shortly to be demolished by the work of a single campaigner. During 1906 J.G. Hay, an experienced natural historian and 'wilderness enthusiast' from New South Wales, had arrived in Western Australia to take up a position in the Department of Lands.¹⁰³ Hay was also a keen and ambitious angler, securing election to the W.A Angling Club and Fish Protection Society in

early October, and celebrating his membership by sending a lengthy letter on fisheries conservation to the *West Australian*.¹⁰⁴ Written in Hay's idiosyncratic style, the letter began by referring to the decline of fishery resources on the east coast of Australia, before drawing upon the observations of the first French and British naturalists to visit the western coastline and suggesting that fish populations in metropolitan waters had since fallen dramatically.¹⁰⁵ An uncommonly informed account of the breeding habits of estuarine species was then provided:

Without going into any elaborate description of the generative processes, it may be sufficient to say that a small mound of sand is raised, on which the ova are left by the female, and which are afterwards fertilised by the male. The special favourite spots for such spawning would be the vicinity of Point Walter and Freshwater Bay.¹⁰⁶

Having outlined his premises, Hay proceeded to argue that the practice of dragging nets along the seabed destroyed spawn already laid, and frightened the remaining breeding fish out of reproducing. The only way of preventing this destruction, and of therefore allowing depleted stocks to recover, lay in a total ban on netting in the estuary.¹⁰⁷ The letter moved on to lament a deficiency in biological information on Western Australian fishes, before finishing with a hint that more zealous campaigning for improved conservation would shortly be undertaken by the W.A. Angling Club.¹⁰⁸

Hay's appearance on the side of anglers immediately transformed the conflict over fisheries management. His knowledge of marine biology was seemingly unrivalled within Western Australia,¹⁰⁹ and his letter, published just a day after the Select Committee had reported to Parliament, added a whole new dimension to existing disputes. The common perceptions and assumptions that had underpinned the angling community's successes, and which were in turn discredited by findings of the Inquiry, could henceforth be readily supported by scientific fact. To repeat their success in countering anglers' opinions, commercial fishers and their advocates would now be required to furnish contrary scientific information. In any case, further conflict was averted by the Government, which decided to ignore most of the Committee's recommendations, proclaiming instead only a slight reduction in the size of nets permitted on the Swan and Canning Rivers.¹¹⁰ Closed waters remained unchanged, and although protests from professional fishers like J.S. Shaw carried through into 1907,¹¹¹ the challenge to the influence of recreational fishing had been effectively thwarted.

In July 1908 J.G. Hay was elected as Secretary of the W.A. Angling Club. At the same annual meeting, the questions of legislative reform and a ban on commercial netting in

estuaries were placed firmly onto the Club's agenda.¹¹² Petitions requesting a ban on nets in Metropolitan waters were dispatched to the Fisheries Department, and correspondence on the issue began to again appear in the *West Australian*.¹¹³ The need to protect breeding fishes and spawning grounds was central to the new campaign; Chief Inspector Gale, committed to the defence of commercial fishing, was forced to find new means of supporting the position he had outlined in 1906. None of the available statistical evidence, he informed the public, lent support to the claims that netting was destroying fish stocks; in fact, commercial catches had lately been on the rise. Nine-tenths of this catch consisted of species targeted only by netters, and the Chief Inspector was not prepared to deny the public such a valuable food supply.¹¹⁴ Professional fishers also sought to engage anglers on the new terms, pointing to the 'remarkable fecundity' of fish to argue that fears surrounding over-fishing and the destruction of breeding grounds were greatly exaggerated.¹¹⁵

The response from the industry left the conflict locked in a stalemate. The stalemate lasted until March 1909, when a deputation of professional fishers, facing financial ruin due to the restrictions placed on their operations, approached the Colonial Secretary to plead their case. An appeal for a reduction in closed waters was made by the deputation, and with press reports indicating the Colonial Secretary's sympathy towards the fishers' request, the angling community reacted.¹¹⁶ Their campaign opened with a public meeting in the Fremantle Council Chambers, attended by the Mayors of Fremantle and North Fremantle, the honorary inspectors and keen anglers H. King and J. Twinem, and Hay, representing the Angling Club. After taking turns to express their fears over the impending threat to recreational fishing, the anglers decided to send a deputation of their own.¹¹⁷ This deputation took place the following week, with Hay, King and Twinem being joined by S. Stubbs, a Legislative Councillor and another leading member of the angling community.¹¹⁸ Together, the anglers expressed their opposition to netting in the estuary, and called for no reduction in closed waters.¹¹⁹ If spawning grounds and juveniles were not protected, the Colonial Secretary was warned, the estuary would become even more depleted of fish.¹²⁰ The Colonial Secretary, in reply, remarked that the views expressed by anglers differed entirely from those of professional fishers and the Fisheries Department, thus presenting him with a tricky situation.¹²¹ On the one hand, the Chief Inspector had advised that restrictions on the dimensions of nets could safely be abandoned; changes in the estuarine environment during the last decade suggested that fish would never be as plentiful as previously; and the Government's duty to primary industry and the consuming public could not be overlooked.¹²² On the other hand, however, the arguments of anglers could not be ignored.¹²³ The deputation was farewelled with a

promise that their views would be considered, and in the end, only a minor loosening of the legal dimensions of nets was decided upon, leaving professional fishers without the greater access to the estuary they desired.¹²⁴

With this latest challenge defeated, Hay pushed on with his efforts to make more information on Western Australian fishes available to the public. During 1909 he published two booklets: *Where to Fish*, a guidebook to angling in metropolitan waters that also contained the competition rules of the Angling Club; and *Something about Fishes*, which provided basic biological details on the more common species found in the State's waters.¹²⁵

Then, in September, he sent off another letter to the local press:

Black Bream are now being caught in extraordinary numbers, both in the Murray and Canning Rivers, although this is the spawning season. In all other portions of the civilized globe a closed season is provided to protect game and fish. Why are we an exception in denying a period to leave unmolested the finny inhabitants of our waters when nature calls together the sexes for the propagation of the species?...Will some of our politicians professing an interest in fish culture...give our fish breathing time and breeding time, in place of being relentlessly pursued by all, year in and year out?¹²⁶

Within days, the matter had been raised in Parliament. A question as to whether the Black Bream would be protected was placed on notice for the Premier, and a response duly followed:

Although it may be considered desirable to declare a closed season for Black Bream, which is an anadromous fish, the difficulty of enforcing any such closed season would be so great as to make the suggestion impracticable.¹²⁷

The Premier may, or may not, have been fully aware that anadromous fishes are those which travel from upstream down to spawn, and he certainly ruled any closed season out, but none of this is particularly important. Hay was at it again a month later, writing to the *West Australian* to offer his quaint descriptions of the Black Bream's breeding habits and outline his general knowledge of things piscatorial,¹²⁸ but this is not important either. What is important is the change that had occurred in the discourse of fisheries management. In comparison to only three years previously, fish were being popularly spoken of in more scientific terms. As these terms carried meanings relating to habitat, life-cycle and reproduction, ambiguities surrounding the impact of net fishing on fish stocks in estuaries were being dispelled in a manner that favoured the interests of recreation and conservation over those of exploitation and industry. Similar to the achievements of earlier in the decade, this latest transition in fisheries management was brought about through a process involving the use of the media to raise public attention, the assistance of influential figures like Stubbs

the politician and King and Twineman the honorary inspectors, and the work of a prominent campaigner, J.G. Hay. His gift to the angling community delivered, Hay turned his attentions to the wilderness, becoming Secretary of the Western Australian Natural History Society in 1910, and playing a leading role in the campaign to have the Stirling Ranges declared a National Park.¹²⁹ For most of the next two decades, the attention of the Fisheries Department would similarly be diverted to the Southern and South West regions of Western Australia.

‘A Fishing Resort for Tourists and Disciples of Isaac Walton’: Fisheries Management in the South West and Great Southern Regions

During the opening months of 1911 a significant development occurred in the management of fisheries in Western Australia. Early in February, the Fisheries Department received notice that the State’s Minister for Lands and Agriculture, James Mitchell, had decided:

that it is necessary to close the whole of Nornalup Inlet and the rivers that run into it [for] the object of creating a fishing resort for tourists and disciples of Isaac Walton.¹³⁰

Mitchell had visited Nornalup Inlet in 1910 as a part of an official government tour concerned with assessing the possibilities of forestry, agriculture and dairying in the surrounding district.¹³¹ The natural aesthetics of the land- and seascapes at Nornalup ‘much captivated’ the touring party, who put aside their aim of encouraging primary industry and promptly declared that 840 acres along the Frankland River would be gazetted a public reserve to protect the more striking ‘beauty spots’.¹³² As an angler of considerable enthusiasm, Mitchell had also been greatly impressed by the quality of fishing on offer at Nornalup.¹³³ His decision regarding netting met with opposition from the Chief Inspector, who complained to James Connolly, the Colonial Secretary, that the limited extent of commercial fishing in the Inlet rendered total prohibition unnecessary.¹³⁴ However, Connolly had toured Nornalup alongside Mitchell, was thus well aware of the Inlet’s attractions, and used his authority to ensure that the ban went ahead.¹³⁵

Once proclaimed, the ban on netting existed unchallenged until August 1919, when a movement towards re-opening the Inlet was initiated by commercial fishing syndicates in Albany and Manjimup.¹³⁶ Approaches were made to the Fisheries Department, local Members of Parliament, and directly to the Government, with both syndicates promising to give preference of employment to returned soldiers, should their requests be granted.¹³⁷ This particular argument resonated well with F. Aldrich, the new Chief Inspector of Fisheries,¹³⁸ who had been planning to re-open Nornalup to fishing by ex-serviceman belonging to soldier

settlements planned for the district.¹³⁹ By the start of 1920, netting in the Inlet had resumed.¹⁴⁰ Before long, however, a protest against the removal of protection had been mounted by officials within the Lands Department, led by J.P. Camm, District Superintendent of the South-West. Wisely, this protest was taken straight to Mitchell, now the Premier of Western Australia.¹⁴¹ Shortly thereafter, netting was restricted to only a three-month season, leading to protests from professional fishers, who claimed their investment in Nornalup had been unfairly jeopardised. Further protests were lodged by Fisheries Department, and after a heart-wrenching letter from an upset fisherman's wife was received by the Premier the Government relented, extending the open season by an extra six months.¹⁴²

The open season did not last for long. Professional fishers, Government generosity notwithstanding, proved unable to realise a profit from their operations, and by the end of 1921 commercial netting had come to an end.¹⁴³ Meanwhile, proposals for soldier and group settlements were being replaced with a far different plan for Nornalup's future. In April 1921 J.P. Camm, together with the Surveyor General H.S. King and Conservator of Forests C.E. Lane Poole, toured the region to conduct a renewed appraisal of the potential for economic development.¹⁴⁴ The future of Nornalup, it was decided, lay not in the exploitation of natural resources, but rather in the creation of a National Park to preserve an example of Australian wilderness, protect native species of flora and fauna, and provide 'a haven into which our people can hope now and again to escape'.¹⁴⁵ A report recommending that 33 000 acres be permanently set aside was delivered to the Government in May. The Government, however, took some time to act on the report, and it was not until September 1924 before a Park of some 29 990 acres was declared.¹⁴⁶ Less time was taken to conserve the fish, with a new ban on netting in the Inlet being proclaimed at the end of 1921.¹⁴⁷

By the time this latest ban was proclaimed, fisheries management in estuaries and inlets had become controversial throughout the Southern and South West regions of Western Australia. As early as January 1913 moves to cater for visiting anglers were underway in Albany, after the Municipal Council passed a resolution calling for Princess Royal Harbour to be protected from netting.¹⁴⁸ The Department, not wishing to unduly impinge upon the rights of professional fishers, saw fit to recommend only a brief closed season in a certain portion of the Harbour, and the Government accepted this recommendation.¹⁴⁹ Greater success was obtained a month later by the Torbay District Progress Association, which secured protection for their small Inlet to enable the creation of an 'angling resort'.¹⁵⁰ In 1917 a three-month closed season on net fishing was applied to Hardy Inlet, on the

Blackwood River, after representations were made on behalf of John Scaddan, leader of the State opposition.¹⁵¹ Scaddan had apparently visited Augusta sometime between losing the office of Premier in July 1916 and losing the support of his Labor party colleagues over the issue of conscription the following April, and was eager to see the good sport he obtained preserved for other holidaymakers.¹⁵² The next request for closed waters reached the Department in the early months of 1919. This request, originating from the town of Gnowangerup, related to both Beaufort or 'Pallinup' Estuary, and Wellstead Estuary at Bremer Bay, where intermittent net fishing was thought to be responsible for the mediocre angling obtained by annual visitors from Wheatbelt districts.¹⁵³

At the start of 1922, a new actor took up the cause of angling-based tourism. S.J. Hayward, Director of the State's official Tourist and Publicity Bureau, approached the Fisheries Department in January to raise concerns widely held in the south and south-west:

One of the great attractions to the holiday seeker and tourist is handline fishing and it is a wellknown [sic] fact that many of our one-time first class fishing resorts are not what they used to be. In my opinion it is necessary that we should do all that is possible to protect and popularise our angling resorts...I do not know the effect of net fishing in our rivers and inlets, but residents of long standing in some of the Districts have strongly expressed the view that by the method adopted by net fishermen the anglers' paradise is destroyed.¹⁵⁴

Nothing much came of the letter,¹⁵⁵ but anglers and guest house proprietors had certainly acquired a new ally. Hayward was among the many correspondents of a Mr. and Mrs. Staines, hoteliers from Augusta, who before giving up in despair in 1929 were undoubtedly the decade's most persistent campaigners for restrictions on net fishing.¹⁵⁶ In 1927, Hayward's assistance was also solicited by the Gnowangerup Road Board, after earlier petitions to the Department failed to produce actions against net fishers in Pallinup and Wellstead.¹⁵⁷ The protests from Gnowangerup carried through into 1928, with neighbouring Katanning Road Board and the region's Member of Parliament joining in the campaign.¹⁵⁸ Over the same weeks and months, netting in Leschenault Estuary re-emerged as a source of considerable public contention. Persistent law-breaking by Greek and Italian fishers, together with fears for the future of tourism, had led Bunbury's Chamber of Commerce to urge that the estuary be closed during summer, and that the local Inspector have his row-boat upgraded.¹⁵⁹ No action was however taken, and the complaints from Bunbury continued.¹⁶⁰

Yet for all these sites of conflict, fisheries management at Wilson's Inlet, near the town of Denmark, provided the most controversy. Here, restrictions on netting were first proclaimed in August 1920 to protect commercial fish stocks from the possibility of over-

exploitation.¹⁶¹ Less than a year later, requests for a total ban on nets began emanating from the town. Concerns over a scarcity of fish had erupted in the local press during March and April 1921,¹⁶² and with Denmark's reputation as a 'health resort' tarnished, both the Road Board and district branch of the Australian Labor Party took up the issue on behalf of anglers.¹⁶³ The desired ban was not obtained, and with considerable support for commercial fishing emerging in the region,¹⁶⁴ new tactics were adopted. To ensure the observation of existing restrictions, local hoteliers secured positions as honorary inspectors,¹⁶⁵ but fish became no easier to catch, and by the tourist season of 1923-4 complaints over the poor quality of angling were again flowing from Denmark.¹⁶⁶

In 1926 the conflict entered a new phase. Early in the year, Denmark's anglers had formed themselves into a club, and calls for a total ban on nets were sent off to the Department from March on.¹⁶⁷ Then, in November, a deputation representing the club waited upon M.F. Troy, the Minister for Lands and Agriculture, during an official visit to the town. Proceedings commenced with the Minister being informed that estuaries and inlets such as Wilson's represented 'the maternity homes and nurseries of fish', and should thus be managed with utmost care.¹⁶⁸ The highly-valued schnapper, in particular, was known to favour Wilson's Inlet for annual breeding, and Troy was urged to do his utmost to ensure the species received complete protection. In making this request, the Angling Club claimed to be motivated by the noble aims of encouraging propagation and conserving an important food supply,¹⁶⁹ but in the flurry of correspondence that followed the deputation a less flattering image of local anglers emerged. According to newspaper clippings of club activities collected by the Inspector of Fisheries in Albany, the membership had been consistently boasting extraordinary catches of schnapper for some considerable time, including large numbers of undersized 'squires', or juveniles.¹⁷⁰ The Chief Inspector therefore had no hesitation in dismissing Government queries as to the merits of further restriction, and also in advising his Inspector to inform the Angling Club of its own legal obligations.¹⁷¹ However, the Government decided to ignore the Chief Inspector's advice, and the portions of the Inlet closed to netting were increased.¹⁷²

Thus encouraged, the Angling Club commenced planning for a campaign to have complete protection extended to estuaries and inlets along the Southern Coast.¹⁷³ Back in Denmark, however, attitudes towards net fishing were undergoing an interesting transformation. In January 1928, the Chief Inspector received a petition from local anglers complaining that closed waters in Wilson's Inlet had actually caused recreational fishing to suffer. These closed waters, it turned out, confined net fishers to areas inhabited by species

like whiting and flathead, which were favoured alongside the schnapper by many of the townspeople and visitors, and which had also become more scarce than before.¹⁷⁴ But rather than asking for further restrictions, the petitioners announced their disapproval of the Angling Club's grandiose agenda. The Inlet, they suggested, contained enough fish of enough different species to allow both forms of fishing to co-exist peacefully, and the rights of professionals could not be denied, given 'the need for fish by the people of Denmark, the Groups, and the Great Southern District'.¹⁷⁵ The extent of divisions between anglers in Denmark was revealed a year later, when the Minister and Chief Inspector paid a visit to the town, receiving one deputation calling for the Inlet to be closed, and another requesting that it be opened up. A compromise was decided upon, and the restrictions were left unchanged.¹⁷⁶ However, in September the Angling Club, which had in the meantime suffered an exodus of members, contacted the Department to declare that their minds were changed, and that they now wished to have closed waters lifted.¹⁷⁷ The Chief Inspector, not wishing to let such a dramatic *volte face* interfere with due process, sent his usual reply that the request 'was receiving consideration'; in January 1929, the portions of Wilson's Inlet closed to net fishing were significantly reduced.¹⁷⁸

This ending to eight years of conflict at Denmark held important implications for fisheries management in Western Australia. Ever since the total ban on net fishing was first applied to Nornalup Inlet -an outcome linked to an unusual desire for environmental conservation- campaigns for similar protections to be extended to other estuaries and inlets had been initiated throughout the South West and Great Southern regions. These campaigns proceeded from similar beliefs to those informing metropolitan anglers in the early 1900's, with a crucial addition; an argument that fisheries management should uphold the interests of an expanding tourism industry. In Denmark, these arguments had been used with relative success, until anglers set two examples that ran contrary to the achievements of previous years and decades. Boasting of extraordinary catches of undersized schnapper whilst simultaneously chastising professional fishers for much the same thing, and replacing requests for restrictions on commercial fishing with calls for sharing and generosity, were both developments that suggested hypocrisy; and at the same time, both were also developments that challenged the perceptions and assumptions most anglers held towards the impact of net fishing in estuaries and inlets. Yet against a backdrop of widespread public controversy, events at Denmark lost significance. Popular opposition to commercial net fishing had been sustained, and the angling community was now able to draw the economic benefits accruing from tourism into their claims to the Government and Fisheries

Department. As the 1930's began, the management of fisheries remained as contentious as ever.

‘WHEN FISH WERE FISH’: ANGLERS REACH THE ZENITH OF THEIR INFLUENCE

The onset of the Great Depression failed to stop the people of Western Australia from arguing about fish. A new controversy erupted in the pages of the *West Australian* during the final months of 1931, ignited by anglers, and centred on net fishing in the Swan Estuary. Net-fishers were blamed for poaching with impunity, for killing juveniles and destroying spawn, and for ruining recreational fishing by leaving nothing alive save for trumpeter and ‘blowies’.¹⁷⁹ During the first months of 1932, the Fisheries Department received a new wave of correspondence and petitions from the Gnowangerup district, where net fishing in Pallinup and Wellstead had again raised the ire of residents and holiday-makers alike.¹⁸⁰ Over at Albany, the Town Council, local tourist groups, local politicians and disgruntled townspeople were continuing to pester the Department for further restrictions on, and stricter supervision of, commercial fishing in Oyster and Princess Royal Harbours.¹⁸¹ Campaigning reached fever pitch in late 1933, when the continued obeisance to the net fishers had apparently left ‘the fate of the town in balance’.¹⁸² In 1934, another series of letters to the editor appeared in the *West Australian*. Three letters, published under the banner of ‘When Fish Were Fish’, captured much of the nostalgia pervading conflict everywhere, because people honestly believed that the golden days of yesteryear -when fish were so plentiful they jumped into boats- had been brought to an end by the failings of fisheries management.¹⁸³ During the summer of 1934-35, holiday-makers at Bunbury proceeded to horrify members of the Chamber of Commerce by leaving town ‘thoroughly disgusted’ with the quality of angling in Leschenault estuary.¹⁸⁴ In September 1935 Gnowangerup’s Road Board gave up on the Fisheries Department altogether, and instead appealed to the Minister for Justice for action to be taken against professional net fishers.¹⁸⁵ And by November, anglers at Denmark had changed their minds and, armed with their own Tourist Association, approached the Department to request that more be done to regulate net fishing in Wilson’s Inlet.¹⁸⁶ For anglers across Western Australia, conditions in the first half of the 1930’s were clearly intolerable.

The second half of the decade began in a more promising fashion. In the first days of 1936 a collection of anglers, hunters and ‘leading citizens’ came together in Perth to form the Fish and Game Propagation, Acclimatisation and Protection Society of Western Australia.

Expressing ‘considerable alarm’ at the ‘rapid depletion’ of ‘native game, bird life, and fish’, the Society adopted a founding objective of ‘furthering the possibilities of sporting facilities’ throughout the state.¹⁸⁷ The Society’s patronage was offered to, and graciously accepted by, Sir James Mitchell, Governor of Western Australia.¹⁸⁸ A second meeting, attended by representatives from all over the South West and Great Southern, took place in the Bunbury R.S.L hall on January 17. At this meeting the ‘aims and ideals’ of the Society were reiterated, a further appeal for support from the ‘public minded’ citizenry was sent out, and a number of new members were enrolled.¹⁸⁹ By the end of the month a special sub-committee had been appointed ‘to deal exclusively with the question’ of declining fish stocks in the rivers, estuaries and inlets of Western Australia.¹⁹⁰

The formation of the Fish and Game Society immediately focussed even more public attention on fisheries management. Subsequent meetings and activities of the Society received extensive coverage in the press, editorials expressing sympathy with the Society’s objectives were published by the *West Australian*,¹⁹¹ and a new wave of correspondence appeared in the newspaper’s letters page.¹⁹² By the middle of April, the special sub-committee had discovered, somewhat predicably, that the cause of depleted recreational fish stocks lay in the outrages of net fishers and the depredations of shags. Attention then turned to the development of alternative policies of fisheries conservation, which the Society intended to put before the Premier, P. Collier.¹⁹³ Mindful of the value of scientific knowledge, the Society approached the University of Western Australia to suggest that a graduate student undertake further study of the causes of fish scarcity, and to offer a place on its Executive Committee to Dr. D.L. Serventy, head of the Department of Biology.¹⁹⁴ Serventy, a prominent naturalist, declined the offer.¹⁹⁵ Efforts continued regardless, with three separate demands most loudly articulated; the appointment of more honorary inspectors, the extermination of shags, and the closing of estuaries to commercial net fishing.¹⁹⁶

Inevitably, conflicts over fisheries management found a way back into the Western Australian Parliament. Towards the end of 1938 deliberations began on a new *Fisheries Act* amendment bill, the first for nearly two decades.¹⁹⁷ The bill did not, however, result from the work of the Fish and Game Society, but rather from an initiative by A.F. Watts, the Member for Katanning. Watts proposed the amendments in the form of a private members bill, and his actions represented the latest development in the Gnowangerup and Katanning Road Board’s campaign for better protection of Pallinup and Wellstead estuaries.¹⁹⁸ Under the proposal, a clause would be inserted into the *Fisheries Act* enabling local governments to be seconded

powers to regulate fishing and declare closed waters and seasons in waters encompassed within municipal boundaries.

Watts' proposal was not supported by the Labor Government of Western Australia. Their case was outlined in the Legislative Council by C.H. Grey, the Minister for Fisheries.¹⁹⁹ Fisheries management was complicated, Grey explained, and only the 'highly specialised' officers employed by the Department possessed the knowledge and experience necessary to devise effective policies for protecting fish; only the Department would be able to use advances in Marine Biology to improve existing management practices:

In all the fisheries of the world it has been noticed that that with different species there are lean and plentiful periods, that is, the periods of scarcity and periods of plenitude come in cycles. Then again, certain fish are found only in certain parts and certain seasons, and are entirely absent at other times. These phenomenon are observed in some species to a greater extent than in others, while in some species they occur with remarkable regularity...Fish, it might be pointed out, depend chiefly on what is known as plankton for their food supply, and it is the study of plankton to which naturalists all over the world are now bending their activities...The days of 'hit or miss' are gone, and only by a proper method of scientific investigation can the best measures of conservation be determined. I consider it would be unwise for the House to decide on what will be an altogether new policy.²⁰⁰

But the Minister's faith in his Department's capacity to improve conservation through scientific investigation failed to impress the rest of Parliament. The attitudes towards angling, net fishing and holiday-making that lay behind the amendments, and which had been generating conflict throughout the 1930's and before, were strongly held by Members of the Upper House, and support for the amendments was considerable. C.H. Wittenoom, a former Mayor of Albany and an enthusiastic angler,²⁰¹ drew upon his experience to endorse the bill

I support the second reading...Much money has been spent upon improvements at various seaside resorts, and the Tourist Department has extended much encouragement to the movement. Almost invariably the first question asked by a visitor is 'Where are the fish?' More often than not he is told that he should have been there ten or fifteen years before...To-day one often returns tired, without a fish, and determined to go elsewhere.²⁰²

H.Tuckey, another keen angler, was equally adamant in his approval:

To think that our fishing grounds are being depleted year by year is most distressing, and the state would benefit if action were taken to rectify the position...People do not realise that fish have interests. They imagine that they can haul their nets day and night and that the fish will not get scared and look for quieter waters. That is a great mistake.²⁰³

Members without first-hand experience had nevertheless been informed of the disappointments encountered by anglers. H.V Piesse thought the measures to be a necessity:

I have known men in somewhat straightened circumstances, owing to the low price of wheat, spending £5 on a trip with their families to Bremer Bay. Their idea was to depend mainly upon the fish they could catch. When they arrived at Bremer Bay, however, they found that fishermen, using nets 2000 yards long, had caught all the available fish, and so they had then to journey 20 or 30 miles to buy meat supplies [interjections]...if those families could have caught enough fish, they would have had all they required for a good holiday...When local residents make use of the reserve as a camping ground, they find it impossible to catch fish with a hook or line, owing to this illegal net fishing by foreign fishermen.²⁰⁴

V. Hammersley knew of similar occurrences:

Repeatedly friends of mine who have made a practice of going on fishing and camping expeditions have returned saying that the whole of the fishery has been ruined by trucks suddenly coming along and drawing up with hundreds of yards of net in places where there was previously remarkably good fishing. This is not an isolated practice, but has become a regular system...The Department has failed to control fishing centres, and we must applaud the various Road Boards that are trying to encourage visitors.²⁰⁵

When the bill came back to the Legislative Assembly, debate took on a new dimension. Members of the Lower House, Government backbenchers included, were aware of the popular perceptions surrounding net fishing, and support was again pledged readily. W.M. Marshall, A.L.P Member for the Murchison, was the first to cross the floor of Parliament:

Why does the Minister hesitate to make this experiment? He must know that the Fisheries Department has failed dismally to police the industry and protect the fish in our waters...The quantity of fish along the coast and in the inlet within a reasonable radius of this city is infinitesimal to-day compared with what it was in years gone by...Old fishermen at South Fremantle frequently speak of the manner in which the regulations are enforced, and of the lack of fish as compared with many years ago...the Fisheries Department has failed in its control of the industry.²⁰⁶

H.H. Styants, who held the seat of Kalgoorlie for Labor, was also swayed by the opinions of experts in deciding to vote against his Government:

There is no great danger in what is being proposed, it is an experiment worth trying, because the whole of the waters where excellent fishing could be obtained 20 or 25 years ago have been denuded of fish. Ask any of the old residents of Fremantle what in their opinion is the cause of good fishing not being now obtainable, and 90 per cent will reply that the waters have been fished out by foreigners.²⁰⁷

Confronted by this tirade, the Minister for Fisheries was forced onto the defensive. He acknowledged the difficulties facing inspectors, admitted that his Government had long viewed Fisheries as a 'money-making' Department, and conceded that during the lean years of the early 1930's the gap between receipts from licenses and expenditure on management had been allowed to widen even further.²⁰⁸ All that was wanting was an official admission of the Department's failure, but this proved unnecessary; the required numbers had already crossed the floor, and against the wishes of the Government, Watts' private members bill was passed.

Although only the Gnowangerup Road Board was ever seconded the powers provided in the 1938 Act, the extent to which the legislative framework of fisheries management catered for recreational fishing had clearly increased. Two years later, when another amendment bill appeared before Parliament, the political influence of anglers was felt again.²⁰⁹ The new bill, unlike the last, came with the official support of the State Labor Government, and sought to effect some rather different changes.²¹⁰ Introducing the bill, the Minister for Fisheries dwelt at length on a clause proposing to expand the Fisheries Department's ability to collect statistical and scientific data. This clause, the Parliament was informed, reflected a growing awareness that 'field investigations' were a fundamental component of 'sound administration' of resources, and owed much to the examples being set at the Federal level, where the Commonwealth Government had recently instructed the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (C.S.I.R) to assist in the development of commercial fishing.²¹¹ Parliament, however, displayed considerably more interest in the bill's other clauses: a proposal for a five-fold increase in fines for illegal fishing; a proposal to expand the Department's powers to seize contraband, arrest suspects, and requisition boats; and a proposal to place the burden of proof in offences against the Act onto the accused.²¹² These measures had come at the behest of the Fish and Game Society, and were instantly endorsed by S. Stubbs, the Member for Wagin, a leading representative of the angling community, and an old campaigner from the days of J.G. Hay.²¹³ According to Stubbs, fish stocks in the Swan Estuary had been severely depleted since the beginning of the century, and illegal net fishing in breeding grounds by foreigners was undoubtedly the cause.²¹⁴ H.T. Berry, the Member for Irwin-Moore and yet another keen angler, expressed similar viewpoints before the House, and proceeded to follow Stubbs in sacrificing party politics to the higher cause of protecting recreational fish stocks.²¹⁵ Yet on the Government side of the chamber, disquiet had emerged over the extent of the proposed fines, powers, and

departures from established principles of 'British justice'. Objections were led by T. Fox, the Member for South Fremantle, with a number of other Labor backbenchers also voicing their disapproval.²¹⁶ However, the amendments were not withdrawn, Government ranks held firm, and the bill eventually passed.

Earlier in 1940, the angling community had demonstrated its strength in a different forum. At the end of 1939 Western Australia's Chief Inspector of Fisheries, A.J. Fraser, had visited Nornalup to 'inquire into advisability' of re-opening the inlet 'to commercial net fishing'.²¹⁷ Immediately, a meeting of protest was held in Denmark, a petition began circulating the town, and deputation planned to the Minister in Perth.²¹⁸ Received by the Minister on November 28, the deputation heard the news that no changes to policy were intended, and that Fraser had merely desired to obtain routine statistical data.²¹⁹ Secretly, however, the Minister was indeed intending to re-open the Inlet, in order to meet the needs of markets in Melbourne, which faced shortages in supply due to the import restrictions on fish imposed after the outbreak of war with Germany.²²⁰ Secrecy notwithstanding, rumours had begun to flow freely, and before the year ended additional protests had been lodged by the Fish and Game Society, the Albany Chamber of Commerce and local Angling Club, the Road Boards of Bridgetown, Manjimup and Denmark, two further petitions, innumerable private citizens, and by another deputation of anglers and hoteliers, kindly introduced to the Minister by S. Stubbs.²²¹

By January 1940, the *West Australian* had entered the controversy on the side of anglers,²²² and by February, the Fish and Game Society had subsumed demands over Nornalup into a larger campaign for a ban on netting in all estuaries and inlets 'from Geraldton to Esperance'.²²³ To all these challenges, the Chief Inspector responded with diligence, decorum, and with creative new arguments.²²⁴ In a memo to the Minister in October, Fraser recounted his response to the claim, aired at a meeting in Denmark some months previously, that fish in Nornalup were already too scarce:

This fact, I said, seemed to prove that the inlet had been over-protected, and went on to explain that over-protection from the point of view of conservation was as bad, if not worse, than under-protection, in-as-much as it allows fish to grow to a great size and adopt cannibalistic habits, with dire results. What I thought Nornalup needed was a good sweeping out with nets.²²⁵

A week later, Fraser provided the Minister with a fresh perspective on the reason why so many thought the Inlet was depleted:

The explanation may be that the majority of anglers complaining of scarcity are inexpert in the angling art. Many dozens of anglers whom I have met think that

all that is necessary to catch fish is to buy a line...a few hooks, and a small quantity of bait, hire a boat and then throw a line into the water. But that is far from being the case...I'm afraid that the majority of anglers fall within this class, and unfortunately they are the most vociferous types.²²⁶

But despite the existence of opinions differing to those of anglers, and despite greatly increased demand for the produce of commercial fishing, public support for tourism and recreational fishing could not be ignored by the Government, and the Minister's plans to re-open the Inlet were scrapped.²²⁷

The defence of Nornalup, an angling icon in Western Australia, was a major achievement. When the time came for more pro-active campaigning, however, further triumphs were to prove elusive. During August 1941, the Cottesloe Town Council passed a resolution calling for net fishing to be entirely banned from the Swan Estuary, and approached the Fisheries Department with their request.²²⁸ Over the next three months, similar resolutions and motions of support were passed by Fremantle's Council, the Road Boards of South Perth, Peppermint Grove, Mosman Park and Melville, and the Local Government Association of Western Australia.²²⁹ Public exchanges between the Councils and the Department commenced, and in late September a conference was convened to discuss the matter.²³⁰ The Chief Inspector again leapt to prominence, defending the rights of professional fishers to 'a fair crack of the whip', and consistently challenging councillors to produce material evidence that resources in the estuary had declined.²³¹ The councillors, in response, professed such evidence to be unnecessary. 'It was common knowledge', they explained, that 'fish were less plentiful' than in years gone by; 'it could only be assumed that netting was responsible'. If netting was not prohibited, 'it will only be a matter of time before there will be no fish left'.²³² Yet on this occasion, popular perception was unable to prevail. Import restrictions had caused the demand for fish to spiral, and Fraser was able to produce statistics indicating that commercial fishing on the estuary had been relatively stable for a long period of time.²³³ The councillors never acknowledged defeat, but by December 1941 the campaign had come to an end.

In the aftermath of defeat, insult was added to injury. During the controversy an observation was raised that a great many anglers, blissfully unaware of legislative requirements, did not return the undersized fish they caught alive to the water. Fraser, among others, even suspected that these anglers destroyed more juvenile fish than professionals, and in late December he took the unheralded step of publicly warning that Inspectors would henceforth place greater emphasis on prosecuting recreational fishers failing to observe

minimum sizes.²³⁴ A few weeks later, the image of anglers suffered another blow. January 1942 marked the three year anniversary of the Gnowangerup Road Board's management of Pallinup and Wellstead estuaries, and the Department celebrated the occasion by paying the district a surprise visit.²³⁵ The Road Board, it was discovered, did not really care about visiting anglers after all, and had instead exercised their powers in blatant self-interest. Both the Board's secretary and the Ranger employed to supervise the estuaries were found to possess nets in breach of their very own regulations, and the local police came forward with the information that they had been instructed to ignore net fishing by residents, and instead prosecute only 'outsiders' found using unlicensed or illegal nets. The police had refused this request, and in the meantime, control of fishing had descended into a farce. Residents and holiday-makers alike now netted the estuaries and adjoining rivers with complete impunity, and the waters were more depleted of fish than ever.²³⁶ These facts were put before a deputation representing the Roads Board in March, which had approached the Minister in a bold move to have additional powers of management secured. Two days later, the Board decided to relinquish its control over Pallinup and Wellstead.²³⁷

The embarrassing capitulation of Gnowangerup's Road Board, like the abrupt about face of Denmark's Angling Club in late 1928, set a precedent that ran contrary to the developments of previous years. Like the arrival of J.G. Hay in the aftermath of the 1906 Inquiry into fishing, however, timely salvation from a loss of hard-won gains was delivered to the angling community. On February 15, 1942 the fortress of Singapore had been surrendered to the Japanese Army, and on February 19 the first Japanese bombs began falling on Darwin. Just when challenges were emerging to the perceptions and understandings that had underpinned a decade, and indeed four decades, of angling successes against commercial net fishing in estuaries and inlets, the attentions of West Australians were firmly diverted away from fish. For a few years, at least, angling would remain at the zenith of its influence over the management of fisheries resources.

'THE BALANCE OF NATURE EVENS THINGS OUT': AN ERA OF FISHERIES MANAGEMENT IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA COMES TO AN END

The Second World War came to an end with the formal surrender of Japan on September 2, 1945. Three months later an angler named C.L. Agg wrote to the *West Australian*:

So the last of W.A.'s famous fishing inlets is to be ruined by net fishing-Nornalup. At present it is a line fisherman's paradise, and an inlet probably as beautiful scenically as any other in the world. A national park, too, and an area to my mind that is an inheritance to be guarded carefully and handed down to

posterity...I am sure that the large numbers of keen fishermen who visit Nornalup will join me in emphatic protest against the unwarranted destruction of the main purpose of their visit- rod and line fishing. At the moment all is well; there are plenty of fish. But there is a small dark cloud on the horizon in the distance and that cloud can do irretrievable harm unless the waters of Nornalup Inlet are closed and closed now to all forms of net fishing.²³⁸

Nornalup had finally been re-opened to commercial net fishing in January 1944 after John Curtin, Prime Minister of Australia, had approached the Premier of Western Australia with a request that netting in the inlet be allowed in order to augment the national supply of protein-based food.²³⁹ During the war, the Commonwealth Government had taken an active interest in encouraging the fishing industry, with output quotas being applied to each state, and advisory committees appointed to devise policies for maximising commercial production. Western Australia's committee had fostered unprecedented co-operation between professional fishers and the Department, and from war's end was kept in place to work on means of facilitating a further expansion of the industry.²⁴⁰ Over the same period, the state Labor Government had likewise been actively involved in encouraging commercial fishing. This involvement was rewarded in 1943 with the creation of a C.S.I.R fisheries research station in Perth.²⁴¹ Under the direction of Dr. D.L Serventy, research commenced on the methods and technologies necessary for developing the resources of open seas, and on applying the insights of marine biology to ensure established fisheries were managed in ways providing for optimum levels of exploitation.²⁴² Commercial fishing in Western Australia thus entered the post-war period positioned on the threshold of a new era of research, development, and management.

In contrast, the angling community of Western Australia ended the war still firmly wedded to the past. Agg's letter of December 17 drew a further seven replies before the end of the month, with a great many others following during the first weeks of January 1946.²⁴³ Overwhelmingly, the arguments these correspondents made harkened back to the conflicts of the 1930's, and earlier. Net fishing, illegal or otherwise, was thought to have ruined angling in estuaries and inlets throughout the South West; Nornalup, the 'anglers' paradise', was feared to be facing imminent and permanent destruction. The State Government and the Fisheries Department bore the brunt of the anglers' fury, receiving criticism for foolishly imperilling the exciting potential of seaside resorts, for having shamelessly 'filched' away anglers' rights whilst their backs had been turned, and for generally failing in their duty of managing recreational fisheries.²⁴⁴

C.L. Agg was prominent throughout the controversy, sending in a further two letters during January to blame fish scarcity on net fishing, and repeat his calls for Nornalup to be protected.²⁴⁵ Another prominent campaigner was J.V. Keane, an elderly angler from Peppermint Grove, well known to the Department as something of a professional nuisance.²⁴⁶ Keane had a memory that stretched back to the 1890's, and made the most of his experience to outline a litany of apparent shortcomings and inadequacies in the management of fisheries.²⁴⁷ On January 17 the government responded to the public pressure, and declared net fishing banned from Nornalup Inlet. The anglers' paradise was saved, but Agg, Keane and others remained unsatisfied. Throughout February and beyond, the public attacks on fisheries management continued.²⁴⁸

For anglers, however, the perception of less fish than before due to commercial netting of estuaries was becoming harder to sustain. Poaching had become much less common in the industry, due partly to closer co-operation between fishers and the Department, and mainly to the fact that inspectors now enjoyed motorised forms of transport.²⁴⁹ Italian fishers, locked up in internment camps during the war, were being replaced within the industry by returning soldiers,²⁵⁰ and with Greek fishers now publicly defended as Australia's wartime allies²⁵¹ the culprits formerly blamed for most things wrong with commercial fishing were suddenly no longer a reason for tightening regulations. The Fish and Game Society was seemingly another casualty of the war, leaving anglers to face the battles of peacetime without that added element of public profile, political influence and organisational strength once enjoyed. And finally the Government, in an effort to encourage a move to deep-sea fishing, followed the ban on netting in Nornalup with a range of similar restrictions on the other estuaries and inlets frequented by holiday-makers,²⁵² thereby robbing campaigners of arguments based on the economic value of tourism.

Together, these changes combined to deny anglers of the post-war period many of the factors that had hitherto contributed to the winning of significant influence over both legislation and policies for managing fisheries. Nothing, however, was to reduce established influence more than the advances being made in scientific knowledge. Led by the C.S.I.R., the advances made from the early 1940's were considerable, and the results took only years to materialise.²⁵³ Attitudes towards over-fishing and sustainability, in keeping with overseas developments, were the first to be revised. The remarkable fecundity of fish, marine biologists had discovered, was even more startling than first thought, and armed with this breakthrough, the Department began dismissing concerns over inadequate protection of breeding grounds and juvenile fish as greatly exaggerated.²⁵⁴ Just as importantly, scientists

had also discovered that masses of plankton, the basis of aquatic food-chains, fluctuated in accordance with variations in the nutrient levels of sea water.²⁵⁵ Studies of estuaries and inlets in Western Australia had shown nutrient levels to be highly variable, and with tagging programs and comprehensive catch statistics providing further information for the C.S.I.R., answers were finally available to explain not only where fish might have gone, but when they might be back again as well.²⁵⁶

In September 1946 the public received clear indications that a new discourse of fisheries management and conservation was emerging in Western Australia. Replying to the latest criticism from J.V. Keane,²⁵⁷ the Minister for Fisheries informed readers of the *West Australian* that:

In common with the Fisheries Departments of the various states, our own department is endeavouring, with my full concurrence, to base its administration not on arbitrary rules but on scientific principles, and although this departure from the more or less rule-of-thumb methods of bygone years is perhaps not readily appreciated by some of the older generation who have failed to keep pace with the times, nevertheless the government is satisfied that the Chief Inspector of Fisheries is on the right track...I wonder whether Mr. Keane has the right concept when he refers to 'conservation' in relation to the fishing industry. Among fisheries biologists it is an outmoded term; it implies a defeatist attitude, a negative approach to a problem which must be tackled courageously, and with positiveness, if we are to achieve results. Today the stress is placed on 'rational exploitation', implying that the resources of nature are there for our use, for our exploitation, and so long as our methods are controlled and regulated to ensure that there will be sufficient small fish for tomorrow's brood stocks, we need have no fear of the future.²⁵⁸

Undeterred, Keane wrote again to the newspaper's editor, repeating the criticisms previously made, and labelling 'rational exploitation' as 'irrational'.²⁵⁹ Yet the Minister's statement left little doubt that anglers had lost out to an emerging scientific technocracy. To this technocracy belonged the knowledge and institutions in which the new discourse of management was constituted; to this technocracy, the initiative behind changes in policy was shifting. For forty-six years, anglers had used shared perceptions, simple biology and social processes to win significant influence in the world of fishing, and this influence had produced restrictions on commercial production; but now, elite perception and advanced biology was combining with ubiquitous developmentalism to encourage management aimed at optimising exploitation. The tables were turning, and the turn was against the angling community.

A week after the Minister's statement was published, a new *Fisheries Act* amendment bill appeared before Parliament.²⁶⁰ Proposals included the mandatory extensions of powers to seize illegal equipment, and that the industry's Advisory Committee, in recognition of the benefits already achieved, be given a permanent role in shaping management policies and approaches. Debate commenced with a speech by S. Stubbs. At a touch over eighty-five years of age, Stubbs was the oldest politician to ever grace the Western Australian Parliament,²⁶¹ and having accumulated some fifty years experience as a keen angler and honorary inspector of fisheries, he considered himself well placed to speak on the bill. Illegal netting had been rife since the 1890's, Stubbs informed the House, and was the leading cause of the sad depletion of fish stocks in the intervening half century.²⁶² These views were endorsed by W.R. Read, the Member for Victoria Park, and another experienced angler.²⁶³ Read's recent luck on the Swan River had even led him to conclude that net fishing had killed so many black bream that the species faced extinction, and he therefore urged that the estuary be closed.²⁶⁴ Both Members, despite sitting in opposition to the Government, pledged their support for the bill.

Yet notwithstanding this support, Members on the government side of the house were no longer prepared to suffer the traditional line of arguing. T. Fox, still parliament's staunchest advocate of commercial fishing, showed how the recent advances in marine biology had provided the opponents of angling's influence with the viewpoints required to challenge the dominant perceptions:

The balance of nature equalises matters. Millions of eggs are laid by fish; and if they all hatched out, I do not suppose there would be enough food in the sea to sustain them. The balance of nature evens things out. I am not prepared to admit that the fishing that takes place in the estuaries has depleted the fish.²⁶⁵

Other Members admonished Read and Stubbs for sidetracking debate away from the more important issues surrounding the fishing industry's future, and otherwise indicated that scientific investigation would henceforth be the privileged method of guiding approaches to fisheries management.²⁶⁶ As the bill progressed through parliament, the more perceptive defenders of angling, like H.T. Berry, concentrated on describing the popularity of angling amongst West Australians, and the desirability of considering the interests of recreational fishers at an official administrative level.²⁶⁷ Lobbying commenced for a representative of angling to be given a place on the proposed Advisory Committee, and by the time debate reached the Legislative Council, a clause providing for such representation had been added to the bill.²⁶⁸

With debate finished, the amendments to the *Fisheries Act* were passed, thereby providing the angling community with a continuing potential for influencing the development of fisheries management. But as the events of 1946 suggested, this potential for influence would be contingent upon an articulation of new attitudes, arguments, and perceptions. By the second half of 1947, the angling community's need for new viewpoints was imperative. In July the fourteen year reign of the state Labor party ended, and a new Government took office. Days after the election the *West Australian* ran an editorial challenging the victors to take the decisive action necessary to finally resolve the 'eternal fish argument in Western Australia'.²⁶⁹ Heartened by the prospect of a conservative stance on conservation, C.L. Agg wrote to the newspaper, calling for 'drastic measures' against net fishers to allow the depleted stocks of estuaries a chance to recover.²⁷⁰ Many other letters followed,²⁷¹ and by the start of October even J.V. Keane was imparting his advice on the management of fisheries.²⁷² The matter, however, had already been resolved.

In the first days in office, the new Government had requested from the Fisheries Department and C.S.I.R. advice as to whether 'any further steps' should be taken 'for the protection of our fish'.²⁷³ The Department produced their report first, outlining current policies and approaches to fisheries management, and hinting that this existing regime provided adequate conservation of resources.²⁷⁴ The report from the C.S.I.R., produced by Serventy, was received shortly thereafter. Serventy had undertaken extensive research for his report, considering a wide range of statistics, records, and data. He could find no examples of net fishing ever causing noticeable depletion to estuarine fisheries, and was able to explain seasonal declines by reference to wider environmental variables.²⁷⁵ What he did find, however, was that perceptions of net fishing harming fish stocks had existed since at least 1900, when the people of Bunbury protested against the removal of restrictions for Leschenault Estuary.²⁷⁶ Serventy knew of similar occurrences from conversations with overseas experts, and reached an interesting conclusion:

The present agitation is a recurrence of the intermittent angler v. commercial fishermen controversy which has flared up in Western Australia as far back as records go. In fact, the issue is almost worldwide...here and elsewhere, vocal and politically powerful angling interests have inspired restrictions on commercial fishing which have no real conservation value...Here in Western Australia, we have had several periodic agitations much like the present one...on each successive occasion, reference is made to the greater abundance of fish a few years previously and threats of virtual extermination a few years hence. Needless to say, the available statistics lend no support to these views.²⁷⁷

Serventy, a conservationist himself, chose not to condemn the angling community for their 'lively concern' in the 'welfare of fisheries'. His advice to the Government was nevertheless damning: the great post-war controversy over fisheries management, along with all other controversies of earlier decades, could not be attributed to commercial fishing in estuaries and inlets, but was instead an outcome of the misinformed perceptions and successful campaigns of the angling community.²⁷⁸

Serventy's report symbolised the end of an era of fisheries management in Western Australia. Before the 1940's were over, the first signs of what lay ahead had emerged. Amateur net fishing, damaged by the fiasco at Gnowangerup, had been made subject to increasing regulations as the decade progressed, and to a change in attitudes that matched. By 1946, even ardent recreational fishers like Berry were revealing how times had changed:

I regret to say, however, that many amateur fishermen get the fine idea of owning a net -I once did- and of asking their friends down for the weekend and of doing a bit of showing off with it. If enough people did that, they would become a serious menace to any fishing ground...I assume that, from now on, control will be exercised over the individual who, for fun or perhaps of conceit, buys a net to show his friends what a clever chap he is.²⁷⁹

Changing attitudes towards angling were not far behind. Ever since F.M Stone told the 1906 Select Committee that anglers took more fish from the Swan river than did professionals, the occasional correspondent to the *West Australian* or Fisheries Department had referred to the possibility that recreational fishers may themselves have contributed to apparent declines in fish stocks. Chief Inspector Aldrich had, of course, taken steps in 1926 to remind Denmark's anglers of their legal obligations, whilst Chief Inspector Fraser in late 1941 made a similar warning to anglers around the state. However, it was not until the end of the decade before illegal fishing by anglers began attracting political attention. L.F. Kelly, Member for Yilgarn-Coolgardie, had shown an interest in fisheries conservation throughout the 1940's, and during 1949 had endeavoured to raise Parliament's awareness of the capture of undersized fish in the Swan Estuary.²⁸⁰ When debate commenced on a new *Fisheries Act* amendment bill, Kelly seized his opportunity.²⁸¹ For the first time in many years, he informed the House, black bream were plentiful in the river, but rumours of law-breaking had started to circulate:

The schedule provides that Bream of 9½ inches may be taken from the river. I venture to say that if the Minister goes down to any of the leading spots on the Swan River he will find Bream from four inches upwards. They are not being taken casually, but in their dozens, and it has been going on for a long time...I particularly ask the Minister to inspect the bags of grown-ups, many of whom are just as serious offenders as the boys and, in some cases, girls. If he or his

inspectors cannot find people with three or four dozen of these small fish, I will be most surprised.²⁸²

As Kelly's advice to the Minister suggests, the second half of the twentieth century would see increasing attention directed towards the regulation of recreational fishing, and anglers increasingly blaming other anglers when a day's fishing in estuaries and inlets produced little but queries as to where all the fish must have gone.

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¹ *The Fishery Act 1889* (53 Vic., #4). Prior to the introduction of this Act, fishing in Western Australia had been subject only to legislation controlling the capture of prawns and outlawing the use of explosives

² *Ibid.* According to the *Fisheries Act 1899*, a fixed engine is any 'hedge, weir, net, device or contrivance of any kind designed for the purpose of catching fish'.

³ *West Australian*, 6/11/1889; also *Western Mail*, 10/4/1886, p-13; 'The History of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife' in *FINS: Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife Magazine* (vol.17,#2,1984), p-7

⁴ see J.E Tenison-Woods, *Fish and Fisheries of New South Wales* (Sydney,1882), pp.160-1;D.G Stead, *Fishes of Australia* (Sydney,1906), pp.15-16; also W. Saville-Kent *The Naturalist in Australia* (London,1897), pp.158ff. Saville-Kent, one of the era's leading marine biologist, was Western Australia's first Chief Inspector of Fisheries. His book, referred to above, offers a fine description of Western Australia's fishes, but gives little information on breeding habits and processes. More background on Saville Kent can be found in 'The History of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife', *op.cit.*, p-7; Bowen, *op.cit.*, p-236; Wilson, Hancock and Chittleborough, *op.cit.*, pp.148-9, 61

⁵ Tenison-Woods, *op.cit.*, pp.160-1.

⁶ *Ibid.* Examples of the thinking behind fisheries management in the early decades of the twentieth century, also of use in providing context for this dissertation, can be found in F.Lewis, 'Fish and Fishing Waters' in J.Barrett(ed.), *Save Australia: A Plea for the Right Use of our Flora and Fauna* (Melbourne,1925)

⁷ 'The History of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife', *op.cit.*, p-7. Prior to becoming a separate Department in 1953, Fisheries had functioned as a sub-department of the Colonial Secretary's, Chief Secretary's and Premier's Department and the Department of the North West. To avoid confusion, this dissertation will use the term 'Fisheries Department', or simply 'the Department'.

⁸ see Bolton,1981, *op.cit.*,p-48; also G. Bolton and D.E.Huthcison, 'The Beginning' in B.J O'Brien(ed.), *Environment and Science* (Perth,1979), pp.12-3

⁹ 'The History of the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife', *op.cit.*, p-7, and 'Report on the Fishing Industry and Trawling Operations for the year 1904 by the Chief Inspector of Fisheries' in *WAVP* (vol.1,1905), pp.11-3

¹⁰ *Ibid.* For accessible and humorous examples of illegal fishing, see Barker and Laurie, *op.cit.*, pp.146,68 and Richards, *op.cit.*, pp.109,67-9. A great number of the sources cited in this dissertation could be used to support the contention that poaching was rife, that fisheries officers were viewed with contempt, and that bush telegraph systems were efficient, but the most concise summary of the situation, together with a reference to a tradition of poaching within the industry, can be found in 'Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to Inquire into the Fishing Industry', *WAVP* (vol.2,1906,#A8), esp. .p-12

¹¹ *Ibid.* In 1891 census, 36 out of the 39 recorded fishers were of Italian origin. In the 1901 report of the Chief Inspector of Fisheries, the figures had risen to 190 Italians, 90 'British', 64 Germans or Scandinavians, 22 Greeks, 22 Asians and 12 Australians. Commercial fishing in Western Australia has long been a multi-cultural affair. See J.Gentilli, *Italian Roots in Australian Soil* (Perth,1983), esp. pp.24-6,33-6

¹² More information on Southern European fishers can be found in M. and R. Bosworth *Fremantle's Italy* (1993), Gentilli, *op.cit.*, and Barker and Laurie, *op.cit.* Southern European fishers seem certain to have often been used as scapegoats, but as Barker and Laurie, pp.146,236, have observed in the case of Bunbury, the preponderance of Mediterranean-style surnames in reports of convictions for offences against fisheries Acts indicate that their poor reputation was not entirely undeserved. Examples of the prejudices directed towards these fishers, often by politicians debating new fisheries bills, include the use of derogatory labels like 'Dagoes', resentment surrounding the short-term contracts and impermanent stays of residence of many of the fishers, their repatriation of profits to Europe, general suspicion arising from differences in language and lifestyle and, of course, their apparent disdain for observing the requirements of fisheries legislation. In their study of the Italian fishermen of Fremantle, Michel and Richard Bosworth, pp.58-60, have noted that the Italians fished mainly in the Ocean, and 'the Anglos' mainly in Estuaries, and refer to the evidence given to the 1906 Inquiry to support their findings. Such a conclusion would appear to be accurate, although the catch statistics quoted by Gentilli would appear to suggest that the 'foreigners' did venture into the Swan Estuary on occasions; they certainly fished in Leschenault and other estuaries in the South and South-West. A great deal of difficulty faces the historian attempting to ascertain what was really happening in the world of Western Australian fishing in the period between 1890 and 1950, and so when further examples of foreign fishers being blamed for illegal fishing are found in this dissertation, readers are at liberty to decide for themselves whether or not they were actually responsible.

¹³ M.Tull, *The Development of Western Australia's Fishing Industry* (Perth,1990), pp.29-30; also M.Tull, 'Profits and Lifestyle: Western Australia's Fishers' in *Studies in Western Australian History* (vol.13,1992), p-95, and R.T. Appleyard, 'Western Australia: Economic and Demographic Growth 1850-1914' in C.T.Stannage (ed.), *A New History of Western Australia* (Perth,1981), pp.211,18-22

¹⁴ for examples, see *Western Mail*, 22/10/1897, p-12 and 14/1/1899, p-7; *WAPD* (vol.15,1899), pp.1932-6,2083-5,372-85; also Richards, *op.cit.*, pp.102,8-9,67-9

¹⁵ *Ibid*, esp. *Western Mail*, 14/1/1899, p-7

¹⁶ see 'Fisheries' in F. Hart *Western Australia in 1891* (Perth,1892), pp.34-9; 'The Fisheries' in T. Chambers *Western Australia: Its Position and Prospects* (Perth,1899), pp.136-8. Chambers, p-136, quoted L.Thompson, Chief Inspector of Fisheries, thus: "The Coast of Western Australia, in its whole length, extending from the torrid to almost the frigid zone, may be said to be teeming with fish life, almost illimitable both in variety and quantity. So far, enterprise and capital have not yet availed themselves of the opportunities nature has so lavishly furnished in turning to commercial account this vast field of yet latent national wealth. Only a few points have been touched on at all, and those by but a few fishermen, who ply their avocation in a most primitive way".

¹⁷ for a reference to the 'angling boom', see the *Western Mail* 11/9/1896, p-21; also Dolin, *op.cit.*, pp.234-7,46-50

¹⁸ *Umpire*, 7/4/1900, 14/7/1900, 19/5/1900, 19/1/1900, 29/1/1902, 1/3/1902, 19/3/1902, 5/4/1902, 9/4/1902; *Western Mail*, 14/1/1898 and 27/1/1899

¹⁹ *Western Mail*, 22/10.1897, p-12, 27/1/1899, p-7; *Umpire* 7/4/1900, 14/4/1900, 5/4/1902; *Southern Times*, 18/10/1900; also R. Richards, *Murray and Mandurah* (Perth,1993), pp.102,7-8,67; A. Barker and M. Laurie, *Excellent Connections* (1992), p-146; R. Draper, *Rockingham* (1997), p-79

²⁰ *Ibid*. also see Dunn, *op.cit.*, pp.105-13

²¹ *Western Mail*, 11/9/1896, p-21. The Piscatorial Society held their meetings in Weld Chambers, and included a number of politicians and other high fliers as members.

²² *West Australian* 2/9/1896; also *Bells Life in Western Australia* 29/8/1896

²³ *Ibid*. Reports on the early activities of the club can be found in *Western Mail* 20/11/1896, p-21, 11/12/1896, p-6; *West Australian* 9/11/1896; *Sportsman* 21/11/1896; *Inquirer and Commercial News*, 11/9/1896, p-15 and 3/9/1897, p-13. It is interesting to note that an article in the *Western Angler* (vol.6,#7,1992) on the West Australian Angling Club claimed that it was not formed until 1904.

²⁴ B. Moore, 'Tourists, Scientists and Wilderness Enthusiasts: Early Conservationists of the South West' in B.K DeGaris(ed.), *Portraits of the South West* (Perth,1993), pp.111,120; also Hutton and Connors *op.cit.*, pp..31-2

²⁵ *Inquirer and Commercial News*, 11/9/1896, p-15;*Bell's Life in Western Australia*, 29/8/1896;*Western Mail*, 11/9/1896, p-21

²⁶ see N.J.Coy, *Fresh-Water Fishing in South-West Australia* (Perth,1979), pp.119-32

²⁷ *Umpire*, 7/4/1900, 14/7/1900, 19/5/1900, 19/1/1900, 29/1/1902, 1/3/1902, 19/3/1902, 5/4/1902, 9/4/1902; *Western Mail*, 27/1/1899, p-7

²⁸ *Ibid*, esp. *Umpire*, 29/1/1902, 5/4/1902, 9/4/1902; *Western Mail*, 27/1/1899, p-7

²⁹ *Ibid*.

³⁰ for the best examples, see the *Inquirer and Commercial News*, 10/9/1897, p-3, and the *Southern Times*, 18/10/1900.

³¹ Dunn, *op.cit.*, pp.108,13,16-26

³² A report in the *Inquirer and Commercial News*, 10/9/1897, p-3 is perhaps the earliest example of the dissatisfaction of anglers with the management of fisheries in estuaries and inlets. Referring to the Peel Inlet and Mandurah, the article stated: "Fishing has been very good here during the last week, and anglers have enjoyed excellent sport. The principal fish caught were kingfish [mulloway], salmon, black bream, skipjack and tailor. The following gentlemen may be mentioned as very fortunate in securing good catches...Members of the W.A Anglers Association and other anglers will be pleased to hear that steps are being taken to close the water in the vicinity of the Brighton Hotel to all net hauling. This is a step in the right direction, as this place is one of the best angling spots in Australia, and needs protection"

³³ L. Thompson, 'Report on the Marine Fisheries of the South and South-Western Coasts of the Colony of Western Australia' in *WAVP* (vol.1,1898)

³⁴ *Ibid*, pp.4-5

³⁵ *Ibid*.

- ³⁶ *Ibid*
- ³⁷ *Ibid*, esp. pp. 3-6
- ³⁸ *Ibid*, pp. 8-9, 14-5
- ³⁹ *Ibid*, pp.3, 5-6
- ⁴⁰ *Fisheries Act 1899* (63 Vic.,#47); *WAPD* (vol.15,1899), pp.1932-6
- ⁴¹ *Ibid*, pp.1932-6,2083-5,372-85
- ⁴² *Ibid*, esp.pp.1935-6,2372
- ⁴³ *Ibid*, , esp.pp.2374,6-7
- ⁴⁴ *Ibid*. In debates over fisheries bills in the years to come, shags always received a share of the blame for perceived depletions in fishery resources, and this blame was invariably followed by calls for official programs of extermination. Other fish-eating birds, such as pelicans and swans, were generally spared Parliament's wrath due to their 'ornamental' qualities. As Keith Thomas has observed, shags have a long history of human disdain in Britain; the same can certainly be said for Western Australia. See K. Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, (London,1983), p-87.
- ⁴⁵ Leading supporters of the bill included R.S Haynes, M.L.C and F.T Crowder, M.L.C, both of whom are mentioned as leading members of the W.A Piscatorial Society in the *Western Mail* 11/9/1896, p-21. Similarly, W. Kingsmill, who spoke at length in favour of the amendments, confessed during debate to being a 'votary of the gentle art of angling'. See *WAPD* (vol.15,1899), pp.1932-6,2083-5,372-85
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid*, pp.2375-85
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid*.
- ⁴⁸ *Southern Times*, 18/10/1900
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid*.
- ⁵⁰ *Southern Times*, 16/10/1900; 18/10/1900; 20/10/1900. See also Barker and Laurie, *op.cit.*, p-146
- ⁵¹ *Southern Times*, 20/10/1900
- ⁵² *Ibid*
- ⁵³ see the *Southern Times*, 18/10/1900; 20/10/1900; 25/10/1900 and 27/10/1900
- ⁵⁴ *Southern Times*, 18/10/1900. As with all speakers in favour of angling, Hayward's speech was reported at length: "The subject they had met to discuss was a most important matter and would affect everyone, not only those interested in the sport, but every trade and business in the town. (Hear, hear.) [Bunbury was] catering for visitors from the goldfields town and they should try to provide them with good boating and fishing.(Cheers. A voice: 'And baths.')...They had here the finest expanse of water in the whole colony for fishing, and at present they had good fishing. [Hayward's] experience was that that would not continue if they permitted net fishing in the estuary again. It was better now than it had been for a long time and that was because of the abolition of net fishing. (Loud cheers.) They should, therefore, endeavour to keep the Estuary in its present state, and not have it depleted as it had been in the past. (Cheers).
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid*.
- ⁵⁶ *Ibid*.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid*.
- ⁵⁸ *Southern Times*, 18/10/1900 and 20/10/1900
- ⁵⁹ *Southern Times*, 18/10/1900
- ⁶⁰ *Southern Times*, 18/10/1900 and 25/10/1900
- ⁶¹ *Southern Times*, 20/10/1900
- ⁶² *Southern Times*, 25/10/1900
- ⁶³ *Southern Times*, 27/10/1900. Throssell's telegram said: "No necessity for deputation. I have much pleasure in meeting the wishes of your people, and am quite in accord with the views expressed. It is of much importance to seaside resorts to have your fishing waters reserved for rod fishing...Best wishes for Bunbury and its people". The *Southern Times* reported a 'universal feeling of satisfaction throughout the town' when the news became known, and offered the following commendation of grassroots democracy : "We must congratulate our fellow townsmen upon having achieved this result. It clearly shows what the people can do when they work shoulder to shoulder with one object in view".
- ⁶⁴ Superintendent, Rottnest Island to Under Secretary, Premier's Department, 29/5/1903, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 32/19: 'Rottnest- closure of Thompson Bay against net fishing' (S.R.O Acc 477, An 108/3) ;Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 4/8/03, *Ibid*. Early in 1905 the Chief Inspector gave a more detailed exposition of his stance towards closing ocean waters, in 'Report on the Fishing Industry and Trawling Operations for the year 1904' in *WAVP* (vol.1,1905). According to Gale, the currents of the open ocean carried fish eggs 'everywhere', meaning that they were unlikely to collect in any one area, such as a shallow and protected bay; and as the ocean habitats of fish extended into water too deep for net fishing, sufficient protection was thought to already exist. Furthermore, most ocean species targeted in Western Australia during these years were migratory, and Gale could see no point in allowing these resources to pass through metropolitan waters unexploited.
- ⁶⁵ For examples, see *Ibid*, and also Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 25/1925: 'Fishing in Warnbro and Cockburn Sounds-General File' (S.R.O. Acc 477, An 108/16)
- ⁶⁶ 'Fishing in the River', 3/12/1904; 'Our Fish Supply', 28/4/1905; 'The Fish Supply', 24/5/1905; 'Netting in the Rivers', 26/5/1905; 'Net Fishing', 17/11/1905
- ⁶⁷ see 'Report on the Fishing Industry and Trawling Operations for the year 1904' *op.cit*.
- ⁶⁸ 'Fishing in the River', 3/12/1904; 'Our Fish Supply', 28/4/1905; 'The Fish Supply', 24/5/1905; 'Netting in the Rivers', 26/5/1905; 'Net Fishing', 17/11/1905.
- ⁶⁹ *Ibid*,esp. 26/5/1905
- ⁷⁰ *Ibid*, esp. 28/4/1905 and 26/5/1905. A reference to the problem of illegal fishing on the estuary can be found in the annual report of Inspector A. Abjornsson, as printed in the *West Australian*, 27/7/1903.

⁷¹ *Ibid*

⁷² *Ibid*, esp. 28/4/1905 and 24/5/1905

⁷³ see 'Anglers versus Fishermen', 15/11/1905; 'Net Fishing', 17/11/1905; 'Net Fishing' and 'Netting in the Swan River', 18/11/1905. Also, see *West Australian* for 28/10/1905

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, esp. 18/11/1905

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, esp. 15/11/1905

⁷⁶ 'Net Fishing in the River', 16/12/1905; 'The Proposed Fisheries Legislation', 18/12/1905. Both letters were published in the *West Australian*.

⁷⁷ *Ibid*.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*.

⁷⁹ *The Fisheries Act 1905* (5 Edw.7, #18); *WAPD* (vol.28,1905), pp.234-9,623-6,696

⁸⁰ *WAPD* (vol.28,1905), p-239. For more on Clarke's support for fisheries conservation, see *WAPD* (vol.22, 1902), p-3047. Also G.Bolton and A.Mozley, *The Western Australian Legislature* (Canberra,1961), p-28

⁸¹ *WAPD* (vol.28,1905), p-239

⁸² *WAPD* (vol.28,1905), pp.623-7. An article on Diamond's adventures as an honorary inspector can be found in *West Australian* 19/6/1903, whilst reference to his angling exploits is in the *Umpire*, 7/4/1900.

⁸³ *WAPD* (vol.28,1905), pp.623-7

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, pp.238,623-7

⁸⁵ see *WAPD* (vol.316,1994), esp.pp.5181-9. The new Act was the *Fish Resources Management Act 1994*

⁸⁶ *Fisheries Act 1905* (5 Edw.7,#18)

⁸⁷ For evidence of these continuing problems, see the 'Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Fishing Industry' in *WAVP* (vol.2, #A8,1906), passim.

⁸⁸ The annual report of The W.A Angling Club for 1906 is instructive "The report of the year showed that the season had been a bad one, owing to the netting of rivers and foreshores...It was contended that what was not destroyed was frightened away by the continual netting". See the *West Australian*, 2/10/1906, and also 28/6/1906

⁸⁹ see the *West Australian*, 24/3/1906, 25/7/1906

⁹⁰ 'The Fisheries Act' in the *West Australian*, 25/7/1906

⁹¹ *Ibid*

⁹² 'Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Fishing Industry', *op.cit.*

⁹³ *Ibid*, esp. pp1-2

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p-12

⁹⁵ *Ibid*, pp.12-3

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p-13

⁹⁷ *Ibid*, pp.23,5-6

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, esp. pp.32-6,9,52,94-5,8

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, pp.78-80

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, pp.78-80

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*. Stone gave the following evidence: *Do I understand you to say that netting in the Swan River has not interfered with the fish from the anglers point of view?* "Yes". *You think the motor boats have a great deal to do with it?* "I think the motor boats at the present time are doing more harm than anything else. At night you can hear the fish going"...*Do you think any harm would result from throwing open the river as far as the racecourse bridge?* "I do not think that it would do any harm, but I think it would be better to keep it as it is now". *No anglers go up there?* "The angling is done right from Fremantle to Guildford. It may be reported that there has been a good catch at Canning Bridge, and the next day you will see 100 persons angling there on that bridge, and on Saturdays you will see the Causeway bridge lined with anglers, and anglers right along the bank". *The result of a report of a good catch?* "Yes, and people flock there". *If it would not affect the angler in the lower part of the river how could it affect him[sic] as far as the racecourse bridge, unless it is because the river is narrower and the fish have not the chance?* "I look on it as reserve for them". *After all, it is a matter of sentiment?* "Yes".

¹⁰² *Ibid*, esp. pp.1-3

¹⁰³ for more information on J.G Hay, see Moore, *op.cit.*, p-130

¹⁰⁴ *West Australian*, 2/10/1906. News of Hay's election to the Angling Club is in the article headed 'W.A Anglers Club: Annual General Meeting', whilst his letter is published under the title 'Our Fish Supply'.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid*. The naturalists Hay referred to were those accompanying 'Napoleon's expedition of 1801' and the 'British expedition of 1827'. After arguing that fish stocks had subsequently declined markedly, the letter went on as follows: "What is the cause, and can it be remedied? There may be several causes, but I will confine my remarks to one only, and suggest a remedy. Captain Stirling, in his report of the visit of Success, in 1827, considered it absurd to speak of the Swan, from Herrison's Island to its mouth, as a river, and instead characterised it as an estuary of the sea, and in this I agree with him...the principal natural breeding ground for fish is this part of the Swan estuary just referred to, and the whole of this should be protected from net fishing, and also prawn netting. At present portions only of the so-called river are proclaimed, and even in these waters a large amount of illicit netting is constantly going on. The simple remedy is to proclaim the whole water as prohibited from the use of nets, and to confiscate any boat found therein with such. The practice of prawn netting is equally or more prejudicial to the encouragement of fish breeding. Without going into any elaborate description of the generative processes...but if the prawn-getter is allowed to come along at such resorts with his net and accompanying iron appendages, harrowing and tearing up the ground, the fish will stand very little of that kind of treatment, but will seek some

more precluded place to produce its young, and therefore we are allowing our fish supply at its genesis to be destroyed.” As Hay’s letter indicates, prawn fishers, who used fine-mesh drag nets, were often singled out by anglers as particularly responsible for depleting fish stocks. This did not, however, mean that calls for an end to netting singled out the prawn fishers; as Hay’s letter also indicates, all forms of commercial net fishing in estuaries were detested by anglers.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ see the ‘Report of the Joint Select Committee appointed to inquire into the Fishing Industry’, *op.cit.*, for more information on the knowledge of marine biology in W.A in this period. The evidence of the Chief Inspector, pp.3-14, is especially illuminating. Gale told the Commissioners his scientific knowledge was based ‘on older and wiser heads than mine’; the fisheries managers of Scotland and England, ‘where people know more than we about edible fish’.

¹¹⁰ see the *Government Gazette*, 1907, p-341

¹¹¹ see the *West Australian*, 21/1/1907, 5/2/1907, 27/12/1907

¹¹² *West Australian*, 8/7/1908

¹¹³ see *West Australian*, 16/8/1908 (two letters), 31/7/1908, 7/8/1908

¹¹⁴ Annual report of the Chief Inspector of Fisheries, as reported in the *West Australian*, 31/7/1908. The Chief Inspector responded thus: “For a considerable time past there has been an outcry by certain sections of the community against net fishing in the Swan and Canning Rivers, and petitions have been received for their complete closure. In considering this question I have always felt it my duty to report to the Government on the standpoint of the greatest good to the greatest number. During last year 109 tons of food fish were captured in these waters and distributed for sale, while this year 120 tons were caught. I have gone very carefully into the question, and, judging by the figures of Inspectors, I find that of the total quantity captured by nets during the year over ninety per centum were of species that could not have been caught by any other method. It follows, then, that if these waters were entirely closed except to angling, all this valuable food fish would be locked up, and practically lost to the consuming public, who out-number very considerably those who are agitating for the closure. There is absolutely no evidence that netting is depleting these waters; on the contrary, the supply has during the last few years increased. The wholesale value of fish caught in the Swan and Canning Rivers for the year was...”

¹¹⁵ ‘Fishermen’s Grievances’, *West Australian*, 7/8/1908

¹¹⁶ *West Australian*, 12/3/1909 and 17/3/1909

¹¹⁷ *West Australian*, 17/3/1909

¹¹⁸ *West Australian*, 26/3/1909 and 3/4/1909

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*

¹²⁰ *Ibid*

¹²¹ *Ibid*

¹²² *Ibid*

¹²³ *Ibid*

¹²⁴ *Ibid*

¹²⁵ J.G Hay, *Where to Fish: With Rules of the West Australian Angling Club and Fish Protection Society* (Perth,1909) and *Something About Fishes: A Brief Account of Fishes, What they Are, Their Organs and Functions* (Perth,1909)

¹²⁶ ‘A Closed Season for Fish’ in the *West Australian*, 21/9/1909

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *West Australian*, 30/10/1909

¹²⁹ Moore, *op.cit.*, pp.130-5

¹³⁰ Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary’s Dept, 10/2/1911, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 35/19: ‘Nornalup River and Frankland River- Closing of to Net Fishing’ (S.R.O Acc 477, An 108/3) . Isaac Walton is a famous fishing writer from the seventeenth century. See I.Walton, *The Compleat Angler, 1676* (London,1971)

¹³¹ L. and G. Fernie, *In Praise of a National Park* (Perth,1989), pp.32-4,47

¹³² *Ibid*, also pp.36-40

¹³³ Mitchell can be found speaking fondly of angling at Nornalup in *WAPD*, (vol.47,1913), p-1606, whilst an article referring to his love for angling may be located in the *West Australian*, 13/2/1935. See also L. and G. Fernie, *op.cit.*, pp.47, 51-5

¹³⁴ Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary Dept, 10/2/1919; Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary Dept., 5/3/1911, in Fisheries and Wildlife Dept. file 35/19, *op.cit.*

¹³⁵ Colonial Secretary to Under Secretary, 16/5/1911, in *Ibid*. See also L. and G.Fernie, *op.cit.*, pp.32-6

¹³⁶ see Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 27/8/1919; H. Hosking to J. Scaddan, M.L.A, 31/12/19; J. Scaddan to Colonial Secretary, 2/1/20; Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 9/1/1920; T.S Talbot to Chief Inspector, 27/9/1920, and also Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 27/9/1920, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 35/19,*op.cit.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Aldrich had been recruited from N.S.W to be W.A’s Chief Inspector of Fisheries in 1911, after Nornalup had already received protection. See the *West Australian*, 3/8/1938, p-19

¹³⁹ Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 27/8/1919; Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 9/1/1920, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 35/19, *op.cit.*

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, also L. and G.Fernie, *op.cit.*, p-62

¹⁴¹ J.P. Camm District Superintendent, South West, to Surveyor General, 6/2/1920; Acting Secretary for Lands to Premier, 13/2/1920, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 35/19, *op.cit.*

¹⁴² J. Scaddan, M.L.A to Colonial Secretary, 29/6/1920; Mr. Strekell to J. Scadden, M.L.A, 27/10/1920; Scaddan to Colonial Secretary,29/10/1920; Mrs.Strekell to Premier, Western Australia, 14/11/1920; Colonial Secretary to Mrs. Strekell, 17/11/20, in *Ibid*.

¹⁴³ See Secretary, Fisheries Department to Secretary, Torbay District Sub-Branch R.S.L, 17/11/1921, in *Ibid*. Also L. and G.Fernie, *op.cit.*, p-61

¹⁴⁴ L. and G.Fernie, *op.cit.*, pp.41-9

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* The report to the Government had the following to say about National Parks: "The purpose of the National Park is to preserve forever, in their primitive condition, certain few, widely separated examples of the Australian wilderness, of the original works and processes of Nature, of our native wild animals, and birds, and plants, living natural lives in the homes of their ancestors. They are havens into which our people can hope now and again to escape. The theory on which National Parks in this real sense must be based is that the people, who have set them apart, can afford to keep this minute fraction their total land area positively and definitely as the one and only reserve where these non-economic purposes may be attained in perfection and without compromise...Unless we follow consistently this principal of 'Hands of the National Parks' with a clear perception of the principles behind it; unless we exclude from the Parks every commercial development which by any possibility can impair their qualities as exhibits of Western Australia and as places for the unadulterated enjoyment of natural scenery, we cannot avoid the gradual and progressive diversion of the National Parks from their proper purpose to those economic purposes which elsewhere rule unchallenged"

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁴⁷ See Colonial Secretary to J.H.Smith, M.L.A., 19/8/1921, Secretary, Fisheries Department to Secretary, Torbay District Sub-Branch R.S.L, 17/11/1921, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 35/19, *op.cit.* Also L. and G.Fernie, *op.cit.*, p-61

¹⁴⁸ Albany Town Clerk to Colonial Secretary, 29/1/1913, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 50/1920: 'Closed Waters-Albany- General Correspondence' (S.R.O Acc 477, An 108/3)

¹⁴⁹ Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 17/2/13; Town Clerk to Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Office, 16/4/1913, in *Ibid.* The Council informed the Department that this decision was 'unacceptable', and suggested that the Chief Inspector 'should have the courtesy to interview His Worship the Mayor or the Town Clerk', but the Department did not alter its position.

¹⁵⁰ Inspector of Fisheries, Albany and Secretary, Eastwood-Torbay District Progress Association to Secretary, Aborigines and Fisheries Department, 12/3/1913; Inspector of Fisheries, Albany to Secretary, Aborigines and Fisheries Department, , in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 41/21: 'Torbay Inlet, Albany- Closing of to Net Fishing' (S.R.O Acc 477, An 108/1). Rumours of the impending removal of this protection in the early 1920's led to a fresh wave of correspondence to the Department.

¹⁵¹ Minister for Mines to Colonial Secretary, 16/2/1917; Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, Aborigines and Fisheries Department, 30/3/1917, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 165/21: 'Blackwood River- Closing of to Net Fishing' (S.R.O Acc 477, An 108/1). The closed season was immediately protested by the 'Settlers of Augusta', who objected to being denied the chance to net fish for domestic purposes, in a petition to the Chief Inspector dated 13/11/1917.

¹⁵² Minister for Mines to Colonial Secretary, 16/2/1917, in *Ibid.* For more information on these tumultuous times for John Scadden and the A.L.P., see B. Oliver, *War and Peace in Western Australia* (U.W.A Press, 1995), esp. chp. 3, pp.90-133.

¹⁵³ See R.B. Gnow to H.R. Robinson, M.L.A., 3/2/1919; H.R. Robinson to Chief Inspector of Fisheries, 13/2/1919; Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 22/2/1919, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 30/1919, 'Pallinup, Wellstead and Bremer Bay-Closing of to Net Fishing' (S.R.O Acc 477, An 108/4). Also *Sunday Times*, 16/2/1919.

¹⁵⁴ S.J.Hayward, Officer in Charge, Tourist and Publicity Bureau to Secretary, Fisheries Department, 9/1/1922, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 59/22: 'General Correspondence by Anglers re: Excessive Net Fishing' (S.R.O Acc 477, An 108/4)

¹⁵⁵ See *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ See Mrs. E.B. Staines to Hayward, Tourist and Publicity Bureau, 23/6/1922; Commissioner of Police to Secretary, Fisheries Department, 21/8/1922; Acting Chief Inspector to Mrs. Staines, 31/8/1922; Mr. H.A. Staines to Minister for Justice, 2/6/1923; Mr. Staines to Chief Inspector, 17/11/1924; Mr. Staines to Green, Inspector of Fisheries, Albany, 5/6/1925; Inspector, Albany to Chief Inspector, 1/6/1925; Chief Inspector to Acting Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Department, 2/12/1925; Chief Inspector to Hickey, M.L.A., 23/12/1926; Mr. Staines to Chief Inspector, 31/8/1928; and Mr. Staines to Chief Inspector, 15/8/1929, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 165/21, *op.cit.* Mr. and Mrs. Staines consistently displayed considerable concern for the welfare of Black and Silver Bream in the Blackwood River.

¹⁵⁷ Manager, Dalgety and Company, Katanning to Chief Inspector, 15/9/1925; Petition from 'Residents of the Gnowangerup Road Board District' to the Fisheries Department, 5/9/1925; S.J.Hayward to Chief Inspector, 19/10/1927, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 30/19, *op.cit.*

¹⁵⁸ See; Secretary, Katanning Road Board to Chief Inspector, 6/3/1928; Secretary, Katanning Road Board to Chief Inspector, 21/4/1928; Secretary, Premiers Department to S.Kitson M.L.A, 5/7/1928, in *Ibid*

¹⁵⁹ Secretary, Bunbury Chamber of Commerce to Chief Inspector, 22/12/1927; Secretary, Bunbury Chamber of Commerce to Chief Inspector, 31/5/1928; Chief Inspector to Secretary, Bunbury Chamber of Commerce, 3/7/1928, in 'Bunbury Chamber of Commerce- Illegal Fishing at, and Closing Waters in the Bunbury Area' (S.R.O Acc 477, AN 108/1) . More information on this particular conflict, together with a animated discussion of the Inspector's problems with deviant foreigners, may be located in Barker and Laurie, *op.cit.*, pp.

¹⁶⁰ Inspector of Fisheries, Bunbury to Secretary, Fisheries Department, 15/5/1929, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 19/27, *op.cit.*

¹⁶¹ See Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 20/6/1919 and the proclamation dated 18/8/1920 in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 75/34: 'Wilson's Inlet-Closing of Waters' (S.R.O Acc 477, An 108/4)

¹⁶² See *Albany Advertiser*, 24/9/1921; *Albany Despatch*, 7/3/1921, 14/3/1921, 24/3/1921, 4/4/1921, 7/4/1921.

¹⁶³ Honorary Secretary, Denmark Branch of the Australian Labor Party to the Fisheries Department, n.d; Secretary, Fisheries Department to Honorary Secretary, Denmark Branch of the Australian Labor Party, 31/3/1921; Secretary, Denmark Road's Board to Chief Inspector, 20/9/1921, in *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ See Smith Bothers to J.Scaddan M.L.A, 26/9/1921; J.Scaddan, Minister for Mines and Member for Albany, to Colonial Secretary, 30/9/1921, in *Ibid.* Also *Albany Despatch*, 14/3/1921 and 4/4/1921

¹⁶⁵ Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Dept. to Secretary, Denmark Road Board, 29/12/1921; Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Dept. to Mr. J.R. Turpin, Denmark, 27/4/1922; J.Twinem to Chief Inspector, 26/5/1922, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 75/34, *op.cit.*

¹⁶⁶ Chairman, Denmark Road Board to Chief Inspector, 7/11/1923; Chairman, Denmark Road Board to Chief Inspector, 28/1/1924; Chief Inspector to Richards, 5/3/1924, in *Ibid*

¹⁶⁷ Honorary Secretary, Denmark Angling Club to Inspector of Fisheries, Perth, 15/3/1926, in *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁸ Minutes of Deputation from 'Members of the Angling Club' to M.F. Troy, Minister for Agriculture, Denmark, 12/11/1926, in *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁰ See undated newspaper clippings included in Inspector of Fisheries, Albany to Secretary, Fisheries Department, 15/6/1926 and undated newspaper clippings in Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 8/12/1926, in *Ibid*.

¹⁷¹ Chief Inspector to Inspector, Albany, 30/6/1926; Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 8/12/1926, in *Ibid*.

¹⁷² Hickey, Minister for Fisheries to M.F. Troy, Minister for Agriculture, 10/12/1926, in *Ibid*.

¹⁷³ See Chief Inspector to Inspector of Fisheries, Albany, 20/2/1928, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 50/20, *op.cit.*

¹⁷⁴ Petition from Anglers of Denmark to Chief Inspector, 25/1/1928, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 75/34, *op.cit.*

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid*

¹⁷⁶ Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 5/2/1929, in *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁷ Hon. Secretary, Denmark Angling Club to Chief Inspector, 29/9/1929, in *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁸ Chief Inspector to Hon. Secretary, Denmark Angling Club, 7/10/129; Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 25/1/1930, in *Ibid*.

¹⁷⁹ 'Netting in the River', 22/8/1931; 'Netting in the Swan', 28/8/1931, p-3; 'Netting in the Swan', 4/9/1931, p-18; 'Fish Netting' 17/11/1931, p-12; 'Fish Netting', 2/12/1931, p-12; 'Netting in the Swan', 4/12/1931, p-23; 'Dynamiting Fish', 10/12/1931, p-14. Two years earlier, the strength of popular perceptions surrounding the impacts of net fishing in the Swan Estuary had been revealed by Hal Colebatch, author of *A Story of a Hundred Years* (Perth, 1929)., Western Australia's official centenary history. Against the celebratory tone of much of his narrative, Colebatch, p-337, informed his readers that "At one time the [Swan] river abounded with fish, but with the growth of population along its banks and extensive netting it now offers limited attractions to the angler"

¹⁸⁰ 'Petition to A. Piesse, M.L.A., from Residents to and Visitors of the Bremer Bay District'; A. Piesse to Chief Inspector, 10/3/1932, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 64/32: 'Pallinup River, Wellstead Estuary and Bremer Bay- General Correspondence' (S.R.O Acc 477, An 108/3)

¹⁸¹ See Secretary, Albany Season Committee to Chief Inspector, 2/5/1931; Town Clerk, Albany to Minister, Fisheries Department, 20/8/1931; Secretary, Albany Tourist and Information Association to Chief Inspector, 18/9/1931; Under Secretary to Chief Inspector, 18/1/1932; in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 50/20, *op.cit.* Also 'Fishing in Oyster Harbour' in *West Australian* 6/6/1931

¹⁸² See Secretary, Albany Tourist and Information Association to Chief Inspector, 27/10/1933; Town Clerk, Albany to Chief Inspector, 30/11/1933, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 50/20, *op.cit.*

¹⁸³ See 'Scarcity of Fish', 22/2/1934; 'When Fish were Fish: Great Catches of Yesterday', 10/6/1934; 'When Fish were Fish', 4/8/1934, p-10; 'Fishing in Closed Waters', 12/8/1934; 'When Fish were Fish', 14/8/1934; 'Illegal Fishing', 24/11/1934; also *Sunday Times*, 12/8/1934, p-9

¹⁸⁴ Secretary, Bunbury Chamber of Commerce to Chief Inspector, 14/12/1934; Secretary, Bunbury Chamber of Commerce to Chief Inspector, 21/1/1935; Chief Inspector to Secretary, Bunbury Chamber of Commerce, 5/2/1935, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 19/27, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁵ Secretary, Gnowangerup District Road Board to Minister for Justice, 20/9/1935, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 138/21, *op.cit.* Also 'Fish Poaching', *West Australian*, 13/8/1935 and 13/7/1935

¹⁸⁶ Secretary, Denmark Tourist and Publicity Association to Chief Inspector of Fisheries, 8/11/1935, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 75/34, *op.cit.*

¹⁸⁷ *South West Times*, 22/1/1936; Leaflet, 'Fish and Game Propagation, Acclimatisation and Protection Society of Western Australia, 7/1/1936, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 47/35: 'Fish and Game Propagation, Acclimatisation and Protection Society of Western Australia- General File' (S.R.O Acc 477, An 108/). At this meeting it was announced that the acclimatisation of trout was to be a leading concern of the Society. In following years, considerable efforts were extended in this direction.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁹ *South West Times*, 22/1/1936; also *West Australian* 21/1/1936, p-10

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid*.

¹⁹¹ *West Australian*, 15/4/1936, p-16. The *West* expressed the following sympathies: "The Fish and Game Society also urges the closing of a number of estuaries to net fishing. This presents less difficulty than the protection of bird life and should meet with the approval of the responsible authorities. Line Fishing is one of the greatest attractions offered by holiday resorts in Western Australia; but in this, too, the general complaint is that the once popular grounds are not what they used to be. The value of tourists is recognised theoretically, but little is being done to provide attractions for them."

¹⁹² See 'Illegal Netting of Fish', 25/1/1936, p-4; 'Fish Preservation', 31/1/1936, p-13; 'Fish Preservation', 4/2/1936, p-12; 'Fish Preservation', 6/2/1936, p-19; 'Fish Preservation', 7/2/1936, p-25; 'Fish Preservation', 14/2/1936, p-27; 'Net Fishing', 7/5/1936, p-7; also 'Fish at Mandurah', 14/11/1936, p-17

¹⁹³ *West Australian*, 13/4/1936, p-9, 15/4/1936, p-16, 2/5/1936, p-23

¹⁹⁴ *West Australian*, 13/4/1936, p-9

¹⁹⁵ see V.Serventy, *An Australian Life*. D. Serventy is older brother of V.Serventy, a prominent Australian naturalist and conservationist of the 1960's and 1970's.

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- ¹⁹⁶ *West Australian*, 2/5/1936, p-23; 23/7/1937, p-19; 2/12/1938
- ¹⁹⁷ *Fisheries Act Amendment Act 1938*, (2-3 Geo.7, #27). The Parent Act had been amended in 1911, 1913 and 1921. Of these, only the *Fisheries Act Amendment Act 1913* (4 Geo.5, #9), which replaced the schedule of minimum weights with a schedule of minimum sizes, had any relevance to recreational fishing.
- ¹⁹⁸ *WAPD* (vol.101,1938), pp.540-3,792,806
- ¹⁹⁹ *WAPD* (vol.102,1938), esp. pp.2906-8. Originally, the Government succeeded in having the bill struck out for breeching standing orders. Watts, however, re-introduced his bill in conjunction with a bill to amend the *Road Board District Act*. The debates referred to in this dissertation actually occurred over both bills.
- ²⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p-2908
- ²⁰¹ See Town Clerk, Albany to the Minister, Fisheries Department, 20/8/1931, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 50/20, *op.cit*; also *West Australian*, 1/3/1927; *Albany Advertiser*, 2/2/1927; *Albany Despatch*, 3/2/1927.
- ²⁰² *WAPD*, (vol.102,1938), p-2919
- ²⁰³ *Ibid*, p-2911
- ²⁰⁴ *Ibid*, p-2671
- ²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p-2909
- ²⁰⁶ *Ibid*, pp.2162-3
- ²⁰⁷ *Ibid*, pp.2163-4
- ²⁰⁸ *Ibid*, pp..2906-12, 16-7
- ²⁰⁹ *Fisheries Act Amendment Act 1940* (4-5 Geo.7, #35)
- ²¹⁰ *WAPD*, (vol.106,1940), esp. pp.1483-4
- ²¹¹ *Ibid*, p-1484
- ²¹² *Ibid*, pp. 1483-4,541-55,2070-79; *Fisheries Act Amendment Act 1940* (4-5 Geo.7, #35)
- ²¹³ The W.A Angling Club had been awarding an annual S. Stubbs trophy since at least 1908. See the *West Australian*, 15/9/1908.
- ²¹⁴ *WAPD*, (vol.106,1940), pp.1542-3. Stubbs' speech is both instructive and entertaining: "I welcome the...bill for many reasons, but regret that its provisions are not more comprehensive. No Member will disagree with me when I say that fish is a staple diet that is fast getting out of reach of the poor. When people are stricken down with various ailments their medical advisers usually recommend fish as part of the diet. Yet supplies of fish are practicably unobtainable...For the last forty years I have been familiar with the waters of Western Australia and fishing. No member of this House has a better knowledge of the fishing industry than I have. Less than forty years ago anyone could take a hook and line, go to any part of the Swan River and quickly catch what he [sic] required of beautiful edible fish. Why is it that that same person could to-day go to the spot where he fished years ago, stay there for hours and yet not catch one fish?...I have known the time when one could catch schnapper, bream and flounder by the hundreds in the Swan River...I call the attention of Parliament to the deplorable condition in which the fishing industry exists today...I assert, definitely and distinctly, that illegal netting, particularly in the rivers where fish have been accustomed to spawn, has been largely responsible for the depletion of our waters...One adverse circumstance is that 90% of those engaged in the fishing industry are foreigners...As a keen angler and a citizen of the state, I recognise that there is a screw loose somewhere"
- ²¹⁵ *Ibid*, pp.1543-6
- ²¹⁶ *Ibid*, esp. pp.1546-7
- ²¹⁷ *West Australian*, 23/11/1939, p-14
- ²¹⁸ *Ibid*
- ²¹⁹ *West Australian*, 29/11/1939, p-14
- ²²⁰ Minister for the North West, 'Notes re: Extension of Fisheries Activities on the South Coast', 27/11/1939, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 35/19, *op.cit*.
- ²²¹ Secretary, Bridgetown Roads Board to Minister, Fisheries Department, 11/12/1939; Honorary Secretary, Albany Tunny and Angling Club to Minister for the North West, 12/12/1939; Secretary, Manjimup Roads Board to Minister for the North West, 13/12/1939; Secretary, Albany Chamber of Commerce to Minister for the North West, 14/12/1939; 'Minutes of Deputation representative of residents and others from Nornalup Inlet which waited upon the Hon. Minister for the North West, 30/11/1939'; Secretary, Denmark Roads Board to Chief Inspector, 19/12/1939. A number of private letters and two undated petitions from 'Residents of Nornalup and Walpole districts to the Minister concerned' were also received by the Fisheries Department in this period. All correspondence comes from *Ibid*.
- ²²² See the editorial for 11/1/1940. The *West Australian* informed its readers: "Those who have had many years of experience at Nornalup are emphatic in their opinion that after a comparatively short period of netting not only would the fish be so reduced as to make commercial fishing a hopeless undertaking, but the district would cease to attract the many hundreds of tourists from within and without the state who now go to Nornalup for line fishing. In view of the efforts being made to provide sporting attractions for tourists...it would be an economic absurdity risk depletion of one of the most popular of the state's tourist resorts. There is unfortunately a tendency to underrate the potential value to the state of the tourist industry..."
- ²²³ In the interests of historical accuracy, it might be noted that this specific campaign was initiated by the Roelands-Brunswick branch of the Fish and Game Society. See the *West Australian*, 10/2/1940, p-19, 13/2/1940, p-3, 5/6/1940, p-7 and 15/6/1940, p-15. See also 'Circular Letter from Roelands-Brunswick Fish and Game Society, 27/5/1940' (Held in Battye Library PR Cabinet, #2334)
- ²²⁴ Fraser replied to all correspondence received in a large batch of letters dated 20/12/1939, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 35/19, *op.cit*.
- ²²⁵ Chief Inspector of Fisheries to Under Secretary, Dept. for the North-West, 17/10/1940, in *Ibid*.
- ²²⁶ Chief Inspector of Fisheries, 'Nornalup Inlet', 25/10/1940, in *Ibid*.

- ²²⁷ See Minister for the North-West to Secretary, South Coast Licensed Fishermen's Association, 29/9/1941, in *Ibid.*
- ²²⁸ *West Australian*, 27/8/1941, p-7
- ²²⁹ See the *West Australian*, 11/9/1941, p-7, 16/9/1941, p-7, 17/9/1941, p-3, 24/9/1941, p-7, 30/9/1941, p-6, 18/10/1941, p-6, 27/10/1941, p-2, 22/11/1941, p-8
- ²³⁰ *Ibid.*, esp. 24/9/1941, p-7, 30/9/1941, p-6, 18/10/1941, p-6
- ²³¹ *Ibid.*, esp. 24/9/1941, p-7, 30/9/1941, p-6
- ²³² *Ibid.*
- ²³³ *Ibid.*, esp. 30/9/1941, p-6
- ²³⁴ *West Australian*, 20/12/1941, p-8. This article, titled 'Undersized Fish: Warning to Anglers', also reproduced a portion of the schedule of minimum sizes prescribed in the *Fisheries Act*. The article warned "As the result of many complaints recently received about the destruction of undersized fish by anglers, the Chief Inspector of Fisheries said yesterday that the majority of anglers seemed to be labouring under the false impression that they exempt from compliance with [the *Fisheries Act*]... 'I believe', said Mr. Fraser, 'that many anglers are ignorant of their responsibilities... Special attention to the catches of amateur fishermen will be paid by inspectors of the department during the coming holiday period. The names of persons found in possession of undersized fish will be taken with a view to prosecution...". During debate over the increased fines for illegal fishing prescribed in the 1940 amendment bill, correspondents to the *West Australian* had been much surprised to discover that the impending 'Hitler-like' penalties applied equally to anglers and professional alike. See 'Undersized Fish', *West Australian*, 8/11/1940, p-5
- ²³⁵ Senior Inspector of Fisheries, Albany to Chief Inspector, 23/1/1942; Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, Department of the North West, 4/2/1942, in
- ²³⁶ 'Minutes of Deputation from Gnowangerup Road Board to Hon. Minister for the North West', 5/2/1942, in *Ibid.*; Secretary, Gnowangerup Road Board to Chief Inspector, 4/3/1942, in *Ibid.*
- ²³⁷ Secretary, Gnowangerup Road Board to Chief Inspector, 4/3/1942, in *Ibid.*
- ²³⁸ 'Fishing at Nornalup: To Be Ruined By Netting', 17/12/1946, p-10
- ²³⁹ Prime Minister, Australia, to Premier, Western Australia, 15/1/1944, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 35/19, *op.cit.*
- ²⁴⁰ see *West Australian*, 13/2/1946, p-6; also *WAPD* (vol.117,1946), p-950
- ²⁴¹ see *West Australian*, 14/7/1945, p-6; 4/1/1946, p-5; 9/1/1946, p-7; also *West Australian*, 13/2/1946, p-6; *WAPD* (vol.117,1946), p-951
- ²⁴² Chief Inspector of Fisheries to Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary's Department, 22/9/1947, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 164/1947 'Protection and Conservation of Fish in W.A.' (Acc 477, An 108/4); *West Australian*, 4/7/1945, p-6; 13/9/1946, p-7
- ²⁴³ *West Australian*, 21/12/1945, p-11(two letters); 28/12/1945, p-6(two letters) and p-7; 1/1/1946, pp.2,3; 5/1/1946, p-9; 9/1/1946, p-7; 18/1/1946, p-10(two letters)
- ²⁴⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁴⁵ 'Anglers Haunts: Effects of Net Fishing', 1/1/1946, p-3 and 'Nets at Nornalup: Effects on the Tourist Trade', 12/1/1946, p-13. Both letters from the *West Australian*
- ²⁴⁶ During the war, Keane had made numerous public and private criticisms of developments in fisheries management. See Minister for Lands and Agriculture to Minister for the North West, 16/4/1941, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 120/1940: 'J.V Keane, Peppermint Grove- Requests for Information' (S.R.O Acc 477, An 108/4)
- ²⁴⁷ 'Fish Resources: S.W Estuaries Depletion', *West Australian*, 18/1/1946, p-10
- ²⁴⁸ All correspondence comes from the *West Australian*. Agg's letters were titled 'Fishing at Mandurah: Where are the Fish?', 4/2/1946, and 'Fish Supplies: Conservation and Controls', 14/2/1946. Keane's letters included 'Fish Resources: Need For Conservation', 28/2/1946
- ²⁴⁹ see *WAPD* (vol.17,1946), p-951; *West Australian*, 4/1/1946, p-5, 24/1/1946, p-9
- ²⁵⁰ see M. and R. Bosworth, *op.cit.*, pp.97-123; also Tull, *op.cit.*, pp.45-7; *West Australian*, 1/12/1945, p-6
- ²⁵¹ for example, see 'Foreign Fishermen', *West Australian*, 27/12/1945, p-8
- ²⁵² see Chief Inspector to Under Secretary, 22/9/1947, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 164/1947, *op.cit.*
- ²⁵³ see Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 164/47, *op.cit.*
- ²⁵⁴ D.L. Serventy, Report on Fisheries Conservation, August 1947, in *Ibid.*
- ²⁵⁵ Chief Inspector of Fisheries to J.V Keane, August 1946, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 120/1940, *op.cit.*; Chief Inspector of Fisheries to Under Secretary, Colonial Secretary Department, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 164/47, *op.cit.*, p-2; also D.L Serventy, 'Conservation of Fish Resources in Western Australia', in *Ibid.*
- ²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, and also T.C Roughley, *Fish and Fisheries of Australia* (Sydney,1966), pp.118,82-4,87
- ²⁵⁷ 'Fishing Grounds. Depletion of Estuaries: Government Action Urged', *West Australian*, 10/9/1946, p-9
- ²⁵⁸ 'Fishing Grounds. Departmental Policy: Rational Exploitation', *West Australian*, 13/9/1946, p-7
- ²⁵⁹ 'Fishing Grounds. Scientific Principles: Reply to Minister', *West Australian*, 16/9/1946, p-10
- ²⁶⁰ *Fisheries Act Amendment Act 1946* (10-11 Geo.7, #48); *WAPD*, (vol.117,1946), esp. pp.951-2
- ²⁶¹ J.Mandy and D.Black, *Western Australian Parliamentary Handbook: Centenary Edition* (Perth,1990), p-244.
- ²⁶² *WAPD* (vol.117,1946), pp.1115-8. In his old age, Stubbs had also developed a theory that heavy winter rains washed the food supply of species like Black Bream out to sea. He was wrong, but not entirely: heavy winter rains upsets nutrient levels in estuaries, which of course affects the entire eco-system.
- ²⁶³ *Ibid.*, pp.1123-4
- ²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p-1112
- ²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.1127-33,1404-6,1559-62

²⁶⁷ *Ibid*, esp. pp.1404-6, 1559-62

²⁶⁸ *Ibid*.

²⁶⁹ *West Australian*, 9/7/1947, p-6

²⁷⁰ 'Conserving Fish: Core of Problem Not Attacked', *West Australian*, 16/7/1947, p-10. A further letter from Agg appeared on 7/10/1947, p-10

²⁷¹ see the *West Australian*, 24/7/1947, p-3(three letters); 5/8/1947, p-3; 28/8/1947, p-10; 24/9/1947, p-10; 29/9/1947, p-11

²⁷² 'Fishing in River and Estuary', 2/10/1947, p-3

²⁷³ Chief Secretary to Chief Inspector of Fisheries, 9/7/1947; Chief Inspector of Fisheries to Under Secretary, 4/8/1947, in Fisheries and Wildlife Department file 164/47, *op.cit*.

²⁷⁴ Chief Inspector of Fisheries to Under Secretary, 4/8/1947; ; Chief Inspector of Fisheries to Under Secretary, 22/9/1947, in *Ibid*

²⁷⁵ Serventy, 'Conservation of Fish Resources in Western Australia', August 1947; and also Serventy to Chief Inspector, 4/8/1947, in *Ibid*.

²⁷⁶ Serventy, 'Conservation of Fish Resources in Western Australia', in *Ibid*

²⁷⁷ *Ibid*

²⁷⁸ *Ibid*

²⁷⁹ *WAPD* (vol.117,1946), p-1126

²⁸⁰ *WAPD* (vol.124,1949), p-1268

²⁸¹ *Ibid*.

²⁸² *Ibid*.