

## Crown-of-Thorns Starfish

THE Crown-of-thorns starfish in Papua and New Guinea has been featured recently in various news items. Fisheries officers of the Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries have conducted surveys in various parts of the Territory and in addition interested members of the public have been asked to supply information about its distribution on coral reefs.

Mr Rex Pyne, Marine Biologist in charge of this investigation, said recently that the evidence collected so far does not indicate that coral reefs and thus indigenous fishing grounds are being destroyed. Nowhere in the Territory is there evidence of the starfish having reached plague proportions. The starfish is widespread on the shallow inshore reefs throughout Papua and New Guinea, but only present in numbers of normal concentration or less (five starfish sighted in one hour's diving). There are many areas in Papua and New Guinea where no starfish have been

found. Mr Pyne added that two unconfirmed reports had been received of reefs having been devastated several years ago by Crown-of-thorns starfish, and that there were indications that the starfish had been present in Territory waters for a very long time.

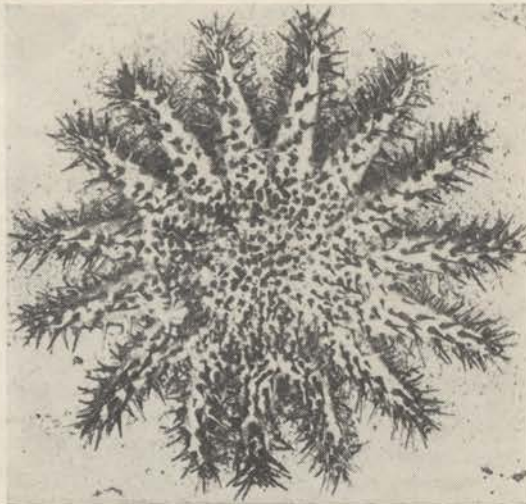
In recent years, a vast amount of time and money has been spent by both American and Australian marine research institutions on a study of the biology of the Crown-of-thorns starfish and effective methods of eradication.

The Territory survey is still proceeding, and reports of sightings are welcome. Information regarding the absence of the starfish on reefs is equally welcome. Reports should be addressed to:—

The Director,

Department of Agriculture, Stock and Fisheries,

Konedobu, T.P.N.G.



(Photo: D.I.E.S.)

Plate I.—Crown-of-thorns starfish.

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