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A U S T R A L I A N N A T U R E M A G A Z I N E



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TASMANIAN TIGER HUNT
WHY WHALES STRAND :: MANTISPA, DAINTY KILLER

MONTHLY

1/-

Tasmanian Tiger or Thylacine

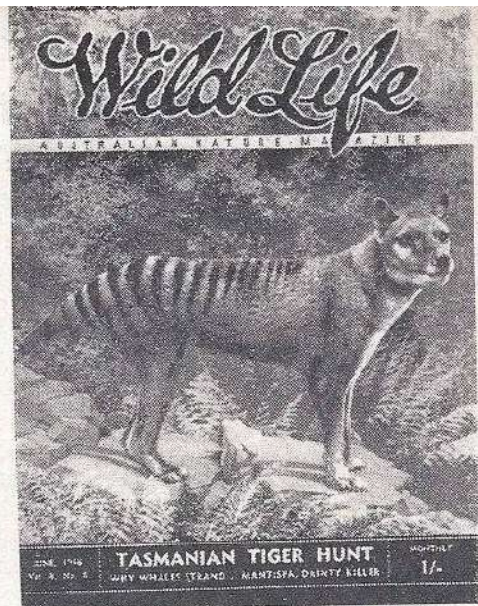
ALTHOUGH the subject of the cover this month is dealt with at length in our main feature article, a few words about the animal itself will not come amiss. *Thylacinus cynocephalus* is known in the vernacular as the Tasmanian or Marsupial Wolf or Tiger—all four combinations are in common use, in addition to the more accurate Thylacine and the even less accurate "Hyena." It is the largest, by far, of the carnivorous marsupials, and was first described by Harris in the Transactions of the Linnaean Society of London in 1808.

It has never been known alive from anywhere but Tasmania, though there is evidence that in prehistoric times it occurred also on the Australian mainland, where it was

probably exterminated by the dingo imported by some of the earliest aborigines.

Because it attacked the sheep of the first settlers, it was ruthlessly hunted, and in course of time almost exterminated.

Its general resemblance to a dog or wolf is wholly superficial, and its affinities are rather with the Tasmanian Devil and the carnivorous American opossum than with any more familiar animal. However, its superficially dog-like character, reflected in the scientific name (literally, "dog-headed pouched dog"), is sufficiently remarkable in detail to make it one of the most noteworthy examples of the phenomenon of convergence—similarity of structure related to function but with no re-



lationship in ancestry. By a happy coincidence this convergence is also remarked upon by Mr Mincham in his article on the Mantispa in this issue.

Snacks and Snippets: Continued

"The wildcatter of Drake's day (Colonel Edwin L. Drake, who 'brought in' the first American oil well in 1859: Ed.) hired a diviner to find the proper place to start drilling a well. The diviner generally had enough common sense to make certain that there were 'burning springs' or evidence of petroleum seepage in the neighborhood. Then he went along with a two-pronged wooden fork upon which was suspended by a string anything from a can of water to his false teeth. When it dipped, either because the diviner hiccupped or grew tired of carrying the stick, he said that it marked the precise spot to start drilling. It was a haphazard method of locating a petroleum-producing anticline, but it was often successful. The wand-waving was largely hocus-pocus."

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SOME STRANGE ALLIANCES: Difficulty is often experienced in finding sufficient accommodation for all the exhibits. In our own case this applies particularly in the bird section. We have so many varieties that it is impossible to supply separate cages and enclosures for each; the result is that there are often two or more kinds kept together.

Over a long period it has been ascertained by trial just what ones

can be expected to agree, and arrangements are made accordingly, otherwise indiscriminate mixing would result in fighting and fatalities.

The mixing of different varieties has resulted in some strange alliances. This is exemplified by the mating of a Magpie Goose, an Australian bird, with a female Egyptian Goose from the Nile. Year after year the female produces eggs, but unfortunately they have not hatched. It is amusing to watch how the gander prevents any other birds in the yard from approaching too close to his consort.

Attachments can form also between animals of widely different species. The Director has a pet Kangaroo Island kangaroo which is very close friends with a cat. The two spend quite a lot of time licking each other. A sheep in the Zoo was a very close friend of the male Alpaca previously kept in his yard, and he was greatly upset when the Alpaca had to be moved. Subsequently, however, he consoled himself with the company of two camels.

—Bulletin of the Royal Zoological Society of South Australia.

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SPEED OF FLIGHT of birds is discussed in an interesting article by Frank W. Lane in Nature Magazine (Washington, DC, USA) for March. The following table quoted there is illuminating and up-to-date:

Bird	Speed mph	Remarks
Gannet	48	
Lapwing	50	
Snow Goose	50	Bird chased
Swan	55	
Canada Goose	60	Bird chased
Mallard	65	For 10 miles
Pintail Duck	65	
Teal	68	Bird chased
Brent Goose	70	
Canvasback Duck	72	Bird chased
Golden Eagle	90	Faster when nose-diving
American Cloud Swift	95	Bird circled round plane travelling 85 mph.
Great Bearded Vulture	110	Bird nose-diving
Sandpiper	110	Flock migrating
Black Vulture	130	Timed on 2 occasions
Spine-tailed Swift (India)	219	
Frigate-bird	261	

All the records except the last two were timed with an aeroplane speedometer. The frigate-bird was timed by chronometer with allowance for windage, in level flight. The swifts were timed with a stop-watch over a two-miles course; no wind factors given.

NATURE BROADCASTS by CROSBIE MORRISON, Editor of Wild Life, are heard weekly from following stations:

NEW SOUTH WALES		
2CH Sydney	Sat., 7.15	
2KO Newcastle	Sun., 6.15	
2AY Albury	Sun., 7.15	
2GN Goulburn	Sun., 7.15	
2GF Grafton	Sun., 7.15	
2BH Broken Hill	Sat., 6.45	
2TM Tamworth	Sun., 6.30	
2GZ Orange	Sun., 6.00	
2KA Katoomba	Sun., 6.00	
VICTORIA		
3DB Melbourne	Sun., 6.00	
3LK Lubeck	Sun., 6.00	
3BO Bendigo	Sun., 7.15	

QUEENSLAND		
4BK Brisbane	Sat., 7.25	
4AK Oakey	Sat., 7.25	
4CA Cairns	Sun., 7.10	
4TO Townsville	Sun., 7.10	
4MK Mackay	Sun., 7.15	
4RO Rockhampton	Sat., 6.15	
SOUTH AUSTRALIA		
5AD Adelaide	Sun., 6.15	
5PI Crystal Brook	Sun., 6.15	
5MU Murray Bridge	Sun., 6.15	
5SE Mt. Gambier	Sun., 6.15	

WESTERN AUSTRALIA		
6IX Perth	Sun., 6.15	
6WB Katanning	Sun., 6.15	
6MD Merriidan	Sun., 6.15	
6KG Kalgoorlie	Sun., 6.20	

TASMANIA		
7HT Hobart	Sun., 6.45	
7EX Launceston	Sun., 6.15	

Wild Life broadcasts are also heard twice a week, at 9.15 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays over the New Zealand stations 1ZB, 2ZB, 3ZB and 4ZB, with alternate talks by Crosbie Morrison and Dr. R. M. Falls, Director of the Christchurch Museum.