

Rare Tiger Trace Seen

See Front Cover

► CHANCES of catching alive one of the world's rarest animals, a Tasmanian tiger, are the best in 30 years.

Experts in Hobart, Tasmania, said that they are confident a tiger will return to a lair on an isolated farm in Tasmania's northwest. A trap has been set in the lair, where the tiger had been only two weeks before.

The location of the lair, found by a farmer some months ago, is being kept secret to guard it from hunters and sightseers.

Microscopic techniques used by the Tasmanian Criminal Investigation Bureau positively identified hairs found in the lair as those from a Tasmanian tiger.

The Tasmanian tiger, a marsupial wolf, resembles a dog and has black and brown stripes over its rump. It stands between 18 inches and 24 inches high at the shoulder.

A Tasmanian tiger was last captured 30 years ago and many hunting expeditions since have been unsuccessful.

The chairman of Tasmania's Animals and Birds Protection Panel, Dr. E. R. Guiler, said the chances of the tiger returning to the lair were good, but whether or not the trap will be successful was another matter.

"Many people claim to have seen Tasmanian tigers over the years, mostly on country roads. Possibly many are mistaken, but some of the sightseers are undoubtedly genuine," he said.

The last positive trace of a Tasmanian tiger was four years ago, when blood and hair from a trap at Sandy Cape on the west coast were identified as a tiger's.

Dr. Guiler said if the tiger were

trapped, it probably would be examined, photographed and then released.

The tiger shown on the cover, properly known as a thylacine or Tasmanian pouched "wolf," was at the National Zoological Park which had five members of the species between 1902 and 1909. They are thought to be the last of the tigers ever in captivity in the United States.

(Cover photograph by the National Zoological Park.)

TECHNOLOGY

Emergency Talk Over Commercial Airwaves

► AN EMERGENCY communications system that uses the carrier signal of commercial broadcast stations without affecting the program on the air is being developed by the Department of Defense. Its first successful test took place during last fall's Northeast power blackout.

A belt of 12 commercial stations now in the system cover an area bounded by Boston, Washington, D.C., Wheeling, W. Va., and Rochester, N.Y. The stations have already been equipped with fallout shelters and emergency standby power generators.

AM home radios sound no different when the system is in use, since the broadcast signal is not distorted, even though the carrier frequency is shifted.

The Federal Communications Commission is working jointly with DOD on the project, which is being evaluated at Rome Air Development Center of Griffiss Air Force Base, N.Y.

PHYSIOLOGY

Brain Operation Stimulates Hair Growth

► UNIVERSITY of Wisconsin scientists have stumbled onto a brain operation that stimulates hair growth.

Their original intention was to find out what effect removing a piece of the "emotional" brain of monkeys would have on maternal behavior. In the course of the experiment, they discovered an unexpected result: After losing sections called the amygdaloid nuclei from their brains, the little female monkeys grew hair back on their shaved scalps much faster than comparable control monkeys who had had a sham operation.

The interesting note is that scientists elsewhere had already discovered that by removing the amygdaloid nuclei

from adult male monkeys, they could send them into hypersexual behavior. Not only were the males hypersexual, but they showed a marked reduction in fear and increased aggressiveness.

If there was a hair effect, it was not noticed, perhaps because there were no control monkeys in the previous experiments.

Carl Thompson, a graduate student in psychology, who did the new amygdaloidectomies on six baby females, said the animals are still too young to give any maternal data, but said the hair effect clearly exists.

Apparently the loss of the nuclei stimulates hair growth, but no one knows why. Nor is it known what, if anything, these brain sections have to do with male behavior.

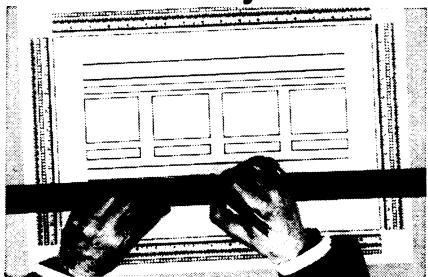
The amygdaloid nuclei are actually two masses of cells, each located in one hemisphere of the "old brain." Lying beneath the cortex, the old brain is composed of structures common to many animals as well as man. One of these structures is the limbic system or "emotional brain," where the nuclei are located.

Possibly the operation affects the hormonal system in some way, but that is only a guess, said the University's authority on primate behavior, Dr. Harry F. Harlow, who, with Dr. J. S. Schwartzbaum, is supervising the research.

In addition to the maternal study, the Wisconsin research is also aimed at larger question: Does the old brain recover from the early loss of one of its sections as the "new brain" or cortex seems to?

Dr. Harlow has previously found that taking pieces out of a monkey's cortex when he is very young has little or no effect on his ability to learn. The cortex, which accounts for man's superior intellectual ability, is apparently rather plastic at birth. Dr. Harlow believes, however, that the same is not true of the old brain, which is lower on the evolutionary scale.

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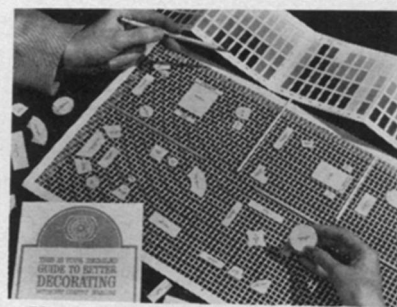


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