

an attempt to regain the speed record recently captured by Italy, at least £200,000 for aircraft, engines, and accessories would be required. In addition, the danger to life and limb is a factor which cannot be ignored; already four British and four Italian pilots' deaths have been due directly to such attempts. The Government, he said, has decided that the R.A.F. is not to be diverted from its normal duties to make attempts upon world records when there is no genuine purpose to be served thereby. In the present stage of development, this principle rules out any immediate attempt on the speed record. If in the normal course of technical development, it appears that we can achieve still better results than those already obtained, whether in speed, height, or long distance, without an undue diversion of service personnel from their proper function and without subjecting them to other than normal service risks, then the making of an attempt to set up a fresh record might well be justified. While there is no doubt that the achievement of such records redounds to the prestige of the R.A.F., and the standing of the aircraft industry, it is possible to exaggerate this value. An aircraft that excels in any one particular sphere will probably always hold the market amongst purchasers requiring those qualities, whether or not the country of its origin happens to hold aeronautical records at the moment. Valuable lessons have been learnt during previous attempts, but it is doubtful whether a further attempt at the present time would produce technical information of comparable value.

Flight Round the World

MR. WILEY POST landed at the Floyd Bennett flying ground just before midnight on July 22, having completed a solo flight round the world in 7 days 19 hours. According to the New York correspondent of the *Times*, he had flown 15,596 miles with only ten stops at an average speed of nearly 130 miles an hour. Mr. Post's first 'hop' was from New York to Berlin, a distance of about 4,000 miles, which was covered in 25 hr. 45 min., thereby creating records for distance solo flight and time. He was forced by bad weather to land later in the day at Königsberg, in East Prussia. His next point of call was Moscow, where he stayed three hours. From there he flew to Novosibirsk and on to Irkutsk. The next stage was from Irkutsk to Harbarovsk, broken by an enforced landing on account of bad weather at Rukhlovo. From Harbarovsk Mr. Post flew over to Alaska, landing at Flat, where he damaged a propeller. The next point was Fairbanks, and from there on to Edmonton and New York, Mr. Post had favourable conditions. It will be recalled that Mr. Wiley Post accompanied Mr. Harold Gatty in a flight round the world in 1931. In his recent flight he used the same aeroplane, the *Minnie Mae*.

Puma at the London Zoo

THOUGH the addition, a few days ago, of a young female puma to the Gardens of the Zoological Society of London introduces no novelty, we venture to

direct the attention of ecologists to its arrival; for here is an animal with some very noteworthy aspects in its life history. The largest of the North, and the second largest of the South American Felidæ, attaining a length of 7-8 ft., it displays a singular versatility in its powers of adjustment to environments standing in the strongest possible contrast. This much might be inferred from the fact that it ranges from Alaska to the extreme south of Patagonia, in this regard out-distancing any other mammal. In North America it feeds on deer, whenever they are to be had, and failing these, on such small animals as mice, and even snails. In South America it ascends the Cordilleras of Chile to a height of 10,000 ft. and in the Peruvian highlands similarly it is to be met with up to the snow-line. Here the guanacos are its prey. In the primeval forests of the Amazons it has taken to the trees, and bounds from bough to bough in prodigious leaps after monkeys: though it also hunts the tapir and other ground game. In the pampas it finds the rhea an easy prey. Unfortunately, it will attack both horses and sheep, and hence has excited no small animosity on that account. Naturally, in so wide a range, the typical tawny coloration, relieved only by an indistinct dorsal stripe, shows more or less marked colour-variations, but these are not sufficiently great to justify specific distinctions. The young, it is to be noted, are spotted, but their spots disappear in about six months, though traces may be found in much older animals. The name 'mountain-lion' has been bestowed on it on account of a superficial likeness to the lion; but the puma has much shorter legs, a much longer tail and no mane.

Measures Against the Musk-Rat

IN the House of Lords on July 12 an interesting statement was made by Earl de la Warr concerning the measures which have been taken against muskrats in Britain. He pointed out, in reply to a series of questions by the Earl of Ilchester, that in the 700 square miles of Shropshire where trapping operations have been carried on, 2,053 muskrats have been killed; in Sussex 125 have been captured, in Surrey 21. The greatest number caught in a week in Shropshire was 117 (week ending March 25, 1933) and since then the numbers have fallen so that with 28 trappers at work the weekly average has decreased to 12. The Ministry of Agriculture is satisfied that the menace generally has been much reduced, and that there is now no necessity to introduce new machinery to deal with the matter. In Scotland the evidence points to the presence of muskrats in considerable numbers only in the counties of Perthshire and Stirlingshire. The cost of the campaign during the last financial year was £2,873 in England and about £1,340 in Scotland, while the estimates for the current year were respectively £5,500 and £2,600. A short time ago the Irish Free State Department of Agriculture announced that a muskrat had been shot near the mouth of the Nenagh River. About four years ago a pair were imported into Ireland, but in the course of a few weeks escaped from confinement; the recent