

which was attended by more than a hundred people of thirteen different nationalities who met to discuss the effect of tourism on Nature protection and protection of fauna and flora in high altitudes. The handbook, price 5s., can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary, Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves, British Museum (Natural History), Cromwell Road, London, S.W.7.

The Marsupial 'Tiger Cat'

EXCEPT for their uniquely spotted coats, in outward appearance and their flesh-eating habits the pouched dasyures or native 'cats' of Australia most nearly resemble foreign carnivores of the weasel family. Excellent photographs have been taken of a male and female of the much larger and generally fiercer 'tiger cat' which had been caught in the act of raiding poultry yards in Sydney; these are described by Ellis Troughton in a recent issue of the *Australian Museum Magazine* (11, No. 5; March 1954). Their captor, Mr. H. Grant, a retired sergeant of police, not only tamed these habitual raiders of the bush but also reduced them to a remarkable state of docile affection. After their capture about six months ago, five young were discovered attached to teats within the shallow-edged pouch of the mother. Their lusty growth gave opportunity for most interesting observations in captivity. The yellowish-brown tiger cat, which is the largest of the native cat group, attaining a length of 4 ft. from nose to tail-tip, is distinguished by having the creamy white spots extending down the tail, instead of being restricted to the body as in all the smaller native cats. Despite size, the tiger cat is an expert climber with a well-developed great-toe which is lacking in the more terrestrial native cats. It has been seen to leap from topmost branches of trees to catch roosting fowls by the neck, killing them in the act of falling with the body to the ground. The tiger cat is plentiful in Tasmania, which has become the last refuge of the largest known marsupial carnivore, the pouched 'wolf' or 'tiger'. It inhabits eastern Australia from the southern border of South Australia to the Cairns region of Queensland, where a smaller geographical race (*gracilis*) is known to occur.

Diseases and Pests on Horticultural Planting Materials

THE Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries has prepared a special guide, by Mr. P. Aitkenhead and Dr. J. A. Tomlinson, entitled "Diseases and Pests on Horticultural Planting Material: a Guide to their Recognition" (pp. 38. London: H.M.S.O., 1953; 6s. net), designed primarily for the information of the Ministry's inspectors in their new duties under the Plant Protection Convention, 1951, of the Food and Agriculture Organization, which requires, among other things, inspection of consignments of plants moving in international traffic. A large number of insect pests and fungus diseases is described in the guide. The style is almost terse, but quite adequate for the purposes of a field-book setting forth to give a specific *ad hoc* determination against a general background of phytopathological knowledge. Host plants are, most conveniently, listed alphabetically, and the guide deals with the semi-dormant planting forms of ornamental and useful plants. Perhaps the most useful feature, however, will be the eighty-three excellent half-tone illustrations; these are from many sources, and certainly enhance the booklet.

Bell Solar Battery

THE June number of the *Bell Laboratories Record*, the semi-popular journal published by the Bell Telephone Laboratories, Inc., of New York, is of unusual topical interest by reason of some articles on transistors, and especially of an account of a new silicon device termed the Bell solar battery. The recent use of silicon in semi-conducting devices is the culmination of more than twenty years of work at the Bell Laboratories, and the solar battery is the result of the development by G. L. Pearson, C. S. Fuller and D. M. Chapin—physicist, chemist and electrical engineer, respectively—of a successful device for converting the sun's energy into electricity. In its present experimental form, the battery has an efficiency of 6 per cent and is expected to reach 10 per cent, in contrast with other photo-electric devices which have never achieved more than 1 per cent. The battery is constructed of wafer-thin silicon strips about the size of razor blades; these are linked together electrically to deliver power from the sun at the rate of 50 W. per square yard of surface. Illustrations accompanying the article refer to possible applications to the driving of a small electric motor and to the operation of a mobile radio transmitter.

International Scientific Radio Union

THE eleventh General Assembly of the International Scientific Radio Union (U.R.S.I.) will be held in The Hague during August 23–September 2. A report on the previous meeting, which was held in Sydney, was published in *Nature* (171, 628; 1953), and this included a full list of the officers of the Union elected for the forthcoming assembly. The Union is composed of national committees which contribute by subscription to its income, and, as a result, are entitled to official representation and participation in the scientific work before and during each General Assembly. The British National Committee for Scientific Radio is organized under the auspices of the Royal Society with Sir Edward Appleton as chairman. This committee has nominated a British delegation comprising a number of scientists directly interested in various aspects of measurements and standardization, radio-wave propagation, atmospheric, radio astronomy and the scientific problems of electronics, waves and circuits. Some of these delegates will be responsible for submitting, on behalf of the British National Committee, reports to the General Assembly reviewing the advances made in the United Kingdom in each of the fields of research indicated by the seven commissions of the Union. These reports and the corresponding ones submitted by other national delegates will be supplemented by other original contributions describing recent research work of direct interest to the international aspects of scientific radio. The General Assembly will also be considering the proposals for enhanced radio observations during the International Geophysical Year, 1957–58, as already incorporated in the preliminary programme drawn up by the special committee composed of representatives of all the international scientific unions interested in this work.

Physical Society: Forthcoming Meetings

A CONFERENCE on "The Physics of the Ionosphere" has been arranged by the Physical Society and will take place at the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge, during September 6–9. The Conference,