



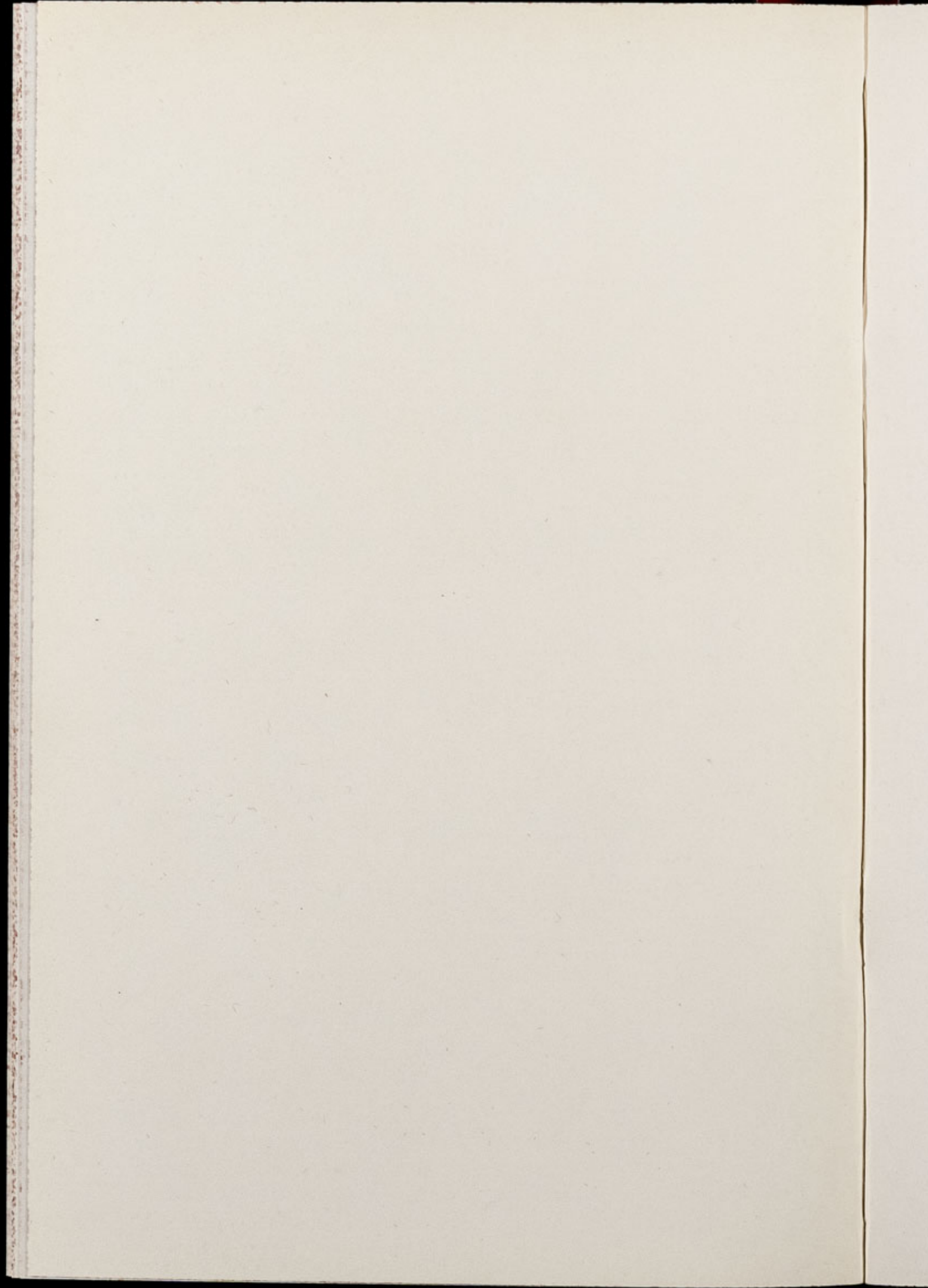
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Chester Zoo News

THE NORTH OF ENGLAND ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY
ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON - BY - CHESTER

September, 1963

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Editorial

This month we have great pleasure in welcoming to Chester, delegates to the Eighteenth Annual Conference of the International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens. Delegates will represent Zoos in Australia, Belgium, Ceylon, Czechslovakia, Denmark, Eire, Finland, France, Germany, Great Britain, Holland, Israel, Italy, Japan, Poland, Spain, South Africa, Switzerland and U.S.A. Naturally we are delighted that we should have been given the opportunity of playing host to the Conference delegates and their wives.

Readers may be interested to know a little more about the Union, so we have included a few notes on this subject on page two.

"*Chester Zoo News*" has now completed its first year. To mark our first birthday we are featuring a photographic supplement in the centre pages, which shows a few of the animals enjoying the sunshine we do have at Chester from time to time.

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COVER: Our Cover Picture this month shows three of Chester Zoo's Polar Bears.

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THE INTERNATIONAL UNION



Between the 9th and 13th of September, the International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens will be holding its Eighteenth Annual Conference at Chester Zoo. This Conference is held in a different country each year and was last held in Great Britain in London in 1950. Since then the Conference has been held in Amsterdam,

Rome, Antwerp, Copenhagen, Basle, Chicago, Rotterdam, Frankfurt, Copenhagen, Cologne, Rome, San Diego and, of course, it is now to be held in Chester. Next year it is proposed to hold the Nineteenth Conference in Sydney, Australia.

Members of the Union represent Zoos in twenty-three different countries and at the time of going to press, a record number of Members have intimated their intention of being present at the 1963 Conference in Chester.

During the week of the Conference, the whole of the Oakfield Restaurant will be closed to the general public. However, our visitors will be well catered for in the Fountain Restaurant, for which a temporary licence has been obtained.

Although the greater part of the Conference week will be taken up with the official and scientific business of the Union, the Zoo authorities are making every effort to entertain the delegates and their wives during their leisure hours.

On Monday, 9th September, the Chairman of the Cheshire County Council and His Worship the Mayor of Chester are giving a Civic Reception for the Conference delegates and their wives and the North of England Zoological Society is holding an official Dinner, at the Grosvenor Hotel, Chester, on Friday, 13th September.

The International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens was founded in Rotterdam on the 24th September, 1946, and is

governed by a Board, which is elected for a three year term of office. At the last election, in Rome in 1961, our own Director-Secretary, Mr. George Mottershead, was elected President; Dr. Ernst Lang, Basle, First Vice-President; Dr. Wilhelm Windecker, Cologne, Second Vice President; Dr. Charles Schroeder, San Diego, Secretary; Mr. Harold Tong, Whippsnade, Treasurer and Professor Jacques Nouvel, Paris, Chairman of the selection Committee.

We are very sorry that our Tropical House, which has now been under construction for several years, will not be completed in time for the Conference, as hoped. This was due to the extensive gale damage done to the roof last December, which prevented work being done on the interior of the House during the winter months. However, our new Monkey House is completed and will be only one of several major developments of recent years. We feel that delegates will find many things to interest them in Chester Zoo.

THE ELUSIVE MILLION

In the February issue of the magazine we forecast that "given the correct weather conditions, 1963 will see attendances topping one million." How near are we to the magic figure, now that we are approaching the end of the summer season? Unfortunately it looks as if the fickle British weather will once again have robbed us of the chance of welcoming one million visitors to the Gardens in one year.

Our record year was 1961, when 982,183 paying visitors came to Chester Zoo. By the 15th August, 1961, 719,399 visitors had entered the Gardens, compared with 718,798 to the 15th of August, this year. We may break our record, but that elusive million is almost certain to escape us in 1963.

THE MONKEY HOUSE

We are happy to say that our new Monkey House is now open to visitors. A description of the building was given in the March issue and next month we hope to publish photographs and further details of this latest development at Chester Zoo. A description of the planting of the House is given on page six,

TUATARA

An important newcomer to the Collection arrived at Chester on the 7th of August. This was a young Tuatara, presented to the Society by the Government of New Zealand. The Tuatara is the most remarkable of all lizards and is found wild, only on a number of small islands off the coast of north-east New Zealand. We hope to include more details and a photograph of our Tuatara in a future issue of the magazine.

PRESENTATIONS

Three Florida Racoons were the gift of Dr. Goss, Director of Cleveland Zoological Gardens, U.S.A. Chester Zoo has friends in many parts of the world, who send interesting additions to the Collection from time to time. Another such friend is Major Rubenstein of Paramaribo, South America. Both the Reptile Section and the Animal Section have benefited in recent weeks, from Major Rubenstein's interest in Chester Zoo. New arrivals from South America have included a pair of young Ocelots, Brazilian Toads, Terrapins, (of a species not already represented in the Collection), a Coral Snake, a young Common Boa and one other Snake, as yet unidentified.

NEW OWLS

We have received, as a gift from Calgary Zoological Gardens, six Great Horned Owls, not recently exhibited at Chester and we are sending out to Canada, Tawny Owls and Little Owls.

BUSHBUCK FROM PARIS

We mentioned last month that we were to receive a male Bushbuck from Paris Zoo in exchange for a Llama. The Bushbuck arrived safely on the 9th of August and will complete one year in quarantine, before joining his new mate at Chester.

ANKOLE CATTLE TO ALBERTA

At the beginning of August, three young Ankole Cattle (two cows and a bull) sailed for Canada on the s.s. Letitia. The three animals, born at Chester Zoo in 1961 and 1962, have gone to the Alberta Game Farm in Canada.



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

ANKOLE CATTLE

ZOO BABIES

Babies have been born in both the Nocturnal and Small Mammal Houses this month. The new addition to the Nocturnal House is a baby Kinkajou and the Small Mammal House has two baby Agoutis and an unknown number of baby Grison.

It is difficult to breed Grison successfully in captivity, so a few words about these animals may be of interest.

Grison are members of the weasel, or *Mustelidae*, family and are found in Tropical and South America. Our pair came to us over two years ago, and unlike many captive Grison, have always got on extremely well together.

The Grison has a comparatively short tail and is about twenty inches in length. Its colouring is grey on the upper part of the back and very dark brown underneath. Despite the Grison's small size it has an enormous appetite.

Actually the baby Grison have been born for some time, but they were not sighted until the beginning of August. To enable the mother to rear her young successfully, the male Grison was removed to another cage before the birth and since then the female has been given absolute privacy.

GARDENING NEWS

The planting of the new Monkey House has now been completed with plants grown in our nurseries for this specific purpose. Between the cages the varieties thompsonii, millerii and sawitzii of Abutilon have been planted, together with Sanchezia, Genista fragrans, varieties of Oleander, Cupressus funibris, Ficus elastica and Jacaranda.

As one enters the House, the centre bed has a Kentia Palm for a centrepiece, surrounded by varieties of Begonia rex, interplanted with Canna Lilies. To the left and right the beds dividing the public passageway are planted with some really good varieties of Bougainvillæa. These will be trained to the wires as they grow and will take a few years to cover the space allotted to them. We are looking forward to the glorious show that these Bougainvillæas will give in future years.

Baskets of Begonia pendula have been suspended from the roof and the planting has been completed with a Datura at either end of the house, together with varieties of Coleous.

At the time of writing, our flower beds and borders are at their best. It has not been a good summer by any means and the long spells of cool, cloudy and wet weather have not suited everything. But, in general, plants have filled up well.

Tuberous Begonias have done exceptionally well this year. They do not like too much hot sun, or to be dry at the roots. It is just the opposite with the fibrous-rooted Begonias. These plants very much resent too much moisture overhead and during a wet spell this is noticeable by their lack of flower — which is soon rectified by a few dry, sunny days.

Heliotrope and Fuchsias have also enjoyed plenty of moisture at their roots and standards of both these lovely plants have never been better than they are this year. Geraniums and Verbena have made rather too much foliage and are short of flower.

Gardening News continued on Page Eleven.



SITITUNGA

J. Whitworth



BASKING CROCODILE

J. Whitworth



"BOBO" AND "RASCAL" MUDSLINGING!

D. J. Tolley



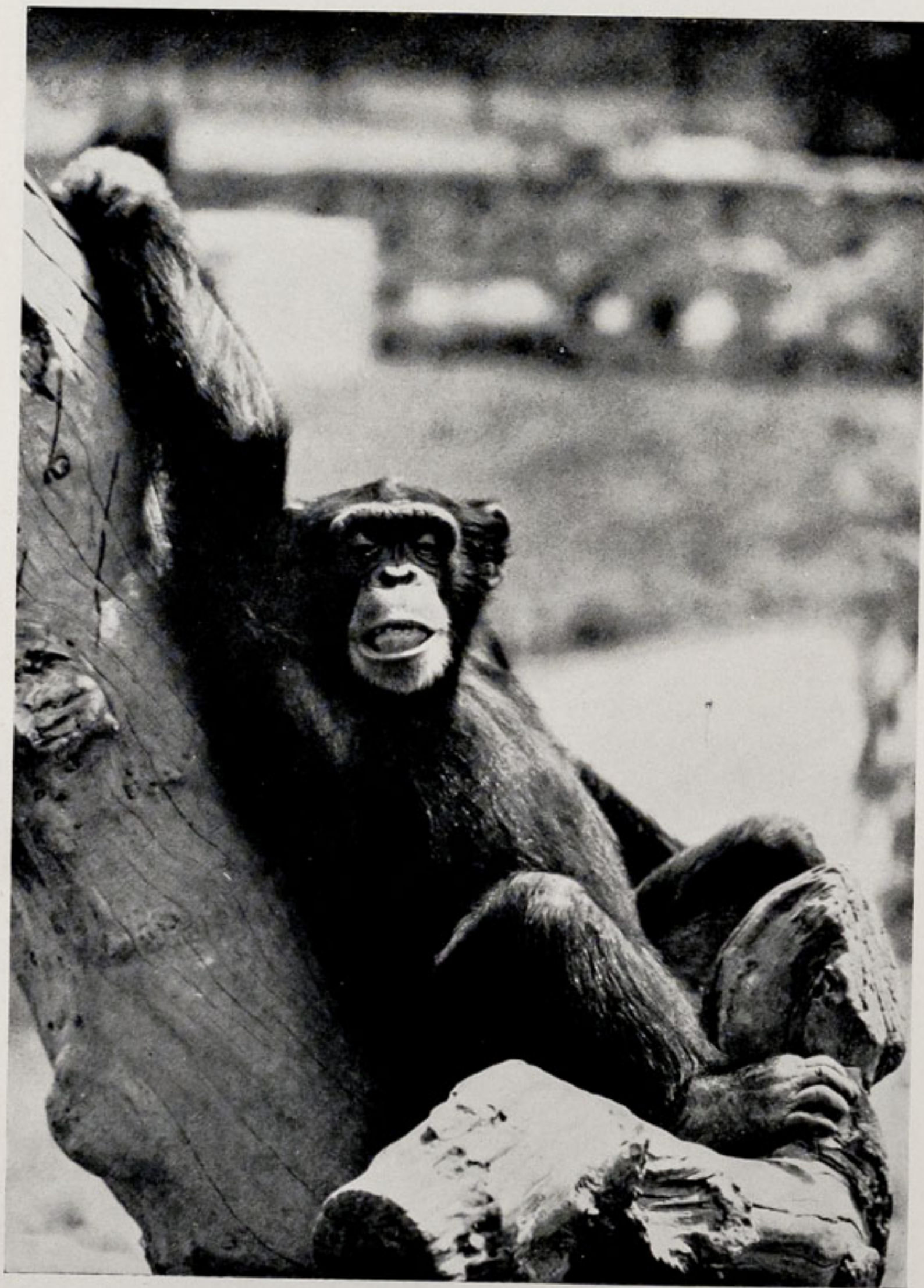
AFFECTION? — SQUARE-LIPPED RHINOS

D. J. Tolley



BLISS — AS PORTRAYED BY "SAMMY"

Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby



"THIS IS THE LIFE"

D. J. Tolley



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

A CORNER OF THE NEW ROCK GARDEN
WITH THE SEA LION POOL IN THE BACKGROUND

We will never get ideal conditions for all the plants grown in the gardens, but altogether it has been quite a satisfying year. A good spell of dry, sunny weather now, would really suit everything, enhance the colour in the beds and prolong the show well into the autumn.

Roses have been very good and are making fine new growth, to give a good display through September. One has to look well ahead in the Gardening Section and all our spring bedding plants, i.e., Pansies, Polyanthus, Wallflowers, etc., are being tended with care in our nurseries and being grown on ready for their transfer to the beds in the Zoo in October.

Next summer's display has also to be thought of and we are busy propagating cuttings of Calceolarias, Abutilons, Fuchsias, Heliotrope, Geraniums, Verbena, all the grey foliage plants and a host of other subjects — with 1964 in mind.

AQUARIUM NEWS

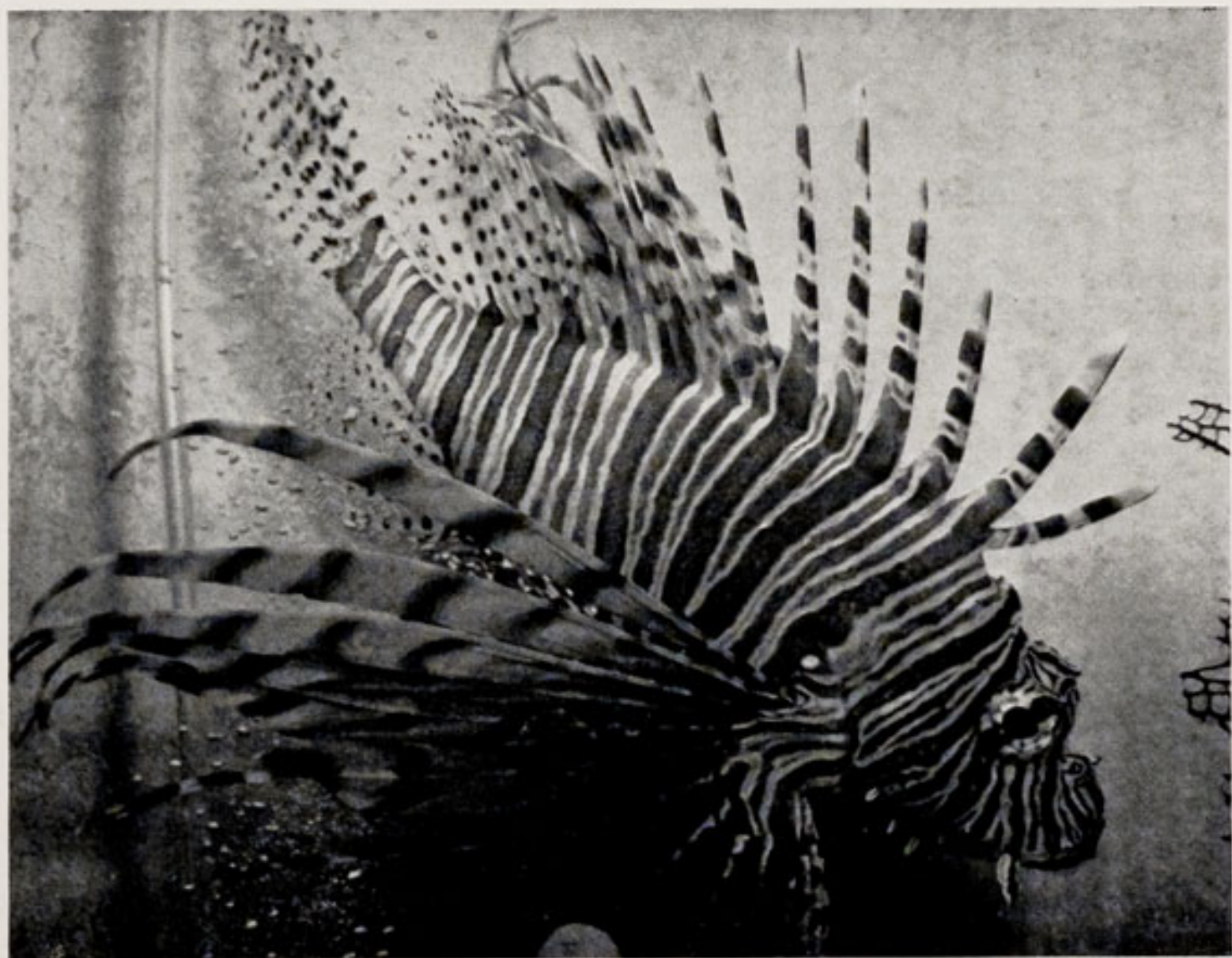
The Aquarium has undergone great changes in the tropical fish section this month. Many fish which were bought as small, insignificant youngsters, have now matured and been transferred to separate tanks, where their individual beauty may be the more easily appreciated. The Bleeding Heart Tetras, Cherry Barbs, Belgian Flag Tetras, both varieties of Australian Rainbow and many others, have been moved in this way.

The Live-bearing population of the Aquarium had increased with such rapidity that it was threatening to overcrowd and overcome the other fish. All the Live-bearers were caught up and carefully sorted out, only the very best being put back on exhibition. Our reserve tanks are now filled to capacity with Platys, Swordtails, Mollies and Guppies, which will ultimately provide live food for the many carnivorous fish in the collection.

One of the most colourful of all Live-bearers is undoubtedly the *Platy variatus*. This splendid fish may be bred to produce many different coloured offspring. Unfortunately, the youngsters, when born, are colourless and may take a year to colour up. Therefore, a good collection of adult *Platy variatus* takes many years to obtain. *Platy variatus* show in striking manner the colour contrast between male and female, so often met with in animals and birds. Colouring in the male *Platy variatus* may vary from reds, golds and oranges to blues, yellows and greens and almost every conceivable shade between. On the other hand, the females can only sport at the best of times, a pale golden body, clear fins and two very obvious spots on the tail.

Apart from the Live-bearers, there have been interesting spawnings of several varieties of fish, indeed, so successful have they been that numerous youngsters have been exchanged for other different specimens.

The Scorpion Fish, *Pterois volitans*, in the marine section has grown rapidly and is now eating dead food, such things as herring and meat being accepted from the fingers. Indeed the Scorpion Fish eats so much food at one sitting that its stomach becomes enlarged



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

SCORPION FISH

and distended. The fish overcomes the effect of gravity by standing on its head in a corner of the tank, pressing its large pectoral fins against the walls to avoid sinking to the bottom. Here the Scorpion Fish stays until its attack of indigestion wears off and the pangs of hunger reawaken an interest in food.

When the Scorpion Fish has been given live food we have observed several interesting characteristics, which relate to its hunting instincts. It was noted that on introducing a suitable fish into the tank as food, the Scorpion Fish would bring the long, trailing rays of its pectoral fins forward, spreading them around his head, rather like a fishing net — thus cutting off its victims line of retreat. Another interesting habit employed by the Scorpion Fish is a heavy puffing action with the mouth, when approaching a fish ensconced in a crevice in rocks or coral. This behaviour would appear to be an attempt to blow its victim out of hiding and into the open, where the Scorpion Fish might catch it with ease.

Recently, the larger of the two Electric Eels, *Electrophorous electricus*, which is almost three feet long, developed the annoying habit of getting a free meal during the night, by forcing its companion to regurgitate its food. We suspect that the Eel accomplished this by using its powers of producing and discharging electric shocks, as it would normally do in the wild. Its accommodating companion was, however, reduced to nothing more than a two foot long, animated food container and must indeed have had a shocking time after meals! To counteract this, we make sure that the larger eel is absolutely full before feeding its smaller companion.

There have been several interesting new arrivals. A pair of Cichlids, *Pelmatochromis guntheri*, were received from Africa recently, together with several rather drab, but nonetheless unusual Gobie species, as yet unidentified. They have all been housed in public exhibition tanks, where they have settled down with remarkable rapidity. Indeed the Cichlids have proceeded to dig themselves in under a large rock, where they sit all day with rather mournful expressions on their faces — occasionally spitting out the odd mouthful of gravel, collected from the back of their hideout.

WATERFOWL

The "true" waterfowl belong to the suborder *Anatidae* and comprise swans, geese, shelduck, surface ducks, diving ducks, perching ducks, eider ducks, sea ducks and stiff-tailed ducks. There are no fewer than one hundred and forty-five species in the suborder, varying in size from the enormous and nearly extinct Trumpeter Swan of North America to the tiny Ringed Teal of South America.

To talk first of swans — everyone is familiar with the large, white, semi-domestic Mute Swan, a common sight on the park lakes of cities, as well as our rivers, ponds and streams. They are formidable birds when nesting or rearing young and many a young angler has been chased from the vicinity of their bulky nest, which may measure as much as four feet across.

At Chester Zoo we have a resident pair of Mute Swans, which spend the breeding season in the Zoo and disappear into the country-



E. Kirkland, F.R.P.S.

MANDARIN DRAKES

side once the cygnets can fly. They always choose the same spot to nest — a dense clump of reeds adjoining one of the Chimpanzee Islands. Our adult Chimpanzees treat the great birds with respect and a sight not to be forgotten is that of the parent swan with three or four cygnets, resting on the grass of the Chimpanzee Island itself — the great Apes keeping well out of range.

Two other species of swan are at present on view, one of which is represented by the pair of Australian Black Swans (*Cygnus stratus*) which this year reared five splendid cygnets. They are most spectacular birds, with their red beaks and black plumage, the feathers of which are curiously curled. The flight feathers are pure white, but are scarcely seen when the bird's wings are in repose. Black Swans are noticeably smaller than the Mute variety, but can be even more aggressive. The Cob (or male swan) will even attack the Silitunga which shares the enclosure, should it come too near the young ones. Luckily the Silitunga is good-tempered.

Representatives of the third species of swan in the Collection are a pair of South American Black-necked Swans (*Cygnus melanocoryptus*) — a white bird with black neck. These are comparative newcomers and were in a delicate state of health on arrival. They have now settled down well and are thriving. The Black-necked Swans are even more clumsy on land than other swan species and it is noticeable that they rarely go far from the water's edge.

A nice little flock of lesser Snow Geese, both white and blue phase, share the Penguin Paddock and help to keep down the grass. Other geese which can be seen at Chester are Ashy-headed Geese, Canada Geese and Chinese Geese — the latter being the domestic form of the wild Swan Goose (*Anser cygnoides*).

Of ducks proper, our large resident flock of free-flying Mallard are most in evidence, especially in the spring when every duck is accompanied by six or seven ducklings. Forty or fifty ducklings are reared successfully every year. In the autumn, the sight of large numbers of these handsome birds in flight is a thrilling one and within the Zoo's boundaries at least, they are safe from the shotgun.

Probably the most spectacular of the small surface ducks is the Mandarin Duck (*Aix galericulata*). A number of these live on the small pond by the Reptile House, which they share with a pair of Baikal Teal, another small bird of which the drake is most handsomely attired. Should the visitor view these birds between June and September, however, no bright colours will be seen, for like many waterfowl, the drakes assume an eclipse plumage, similar to that of the female, after the breeding season and only reassume their coats of many colours, after the autumn moult.

A near relation of the Mandarin Duck is the North American Carolina Duck, or Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*). Although the drake's plumage is less spectacular than that of the Mandarin's, to some tastes he is the more attractive. Two pairs of Carolina Ducks live on the same pond as the Black Swans.

An interesting fact about both Mandarin and Carolina Ducks is that by nature they nest in holes in trees, unlike most waterfowl which normally nest on the ground. In captivity they must be provided with elevated nest boxes, complete with small ladders.



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