



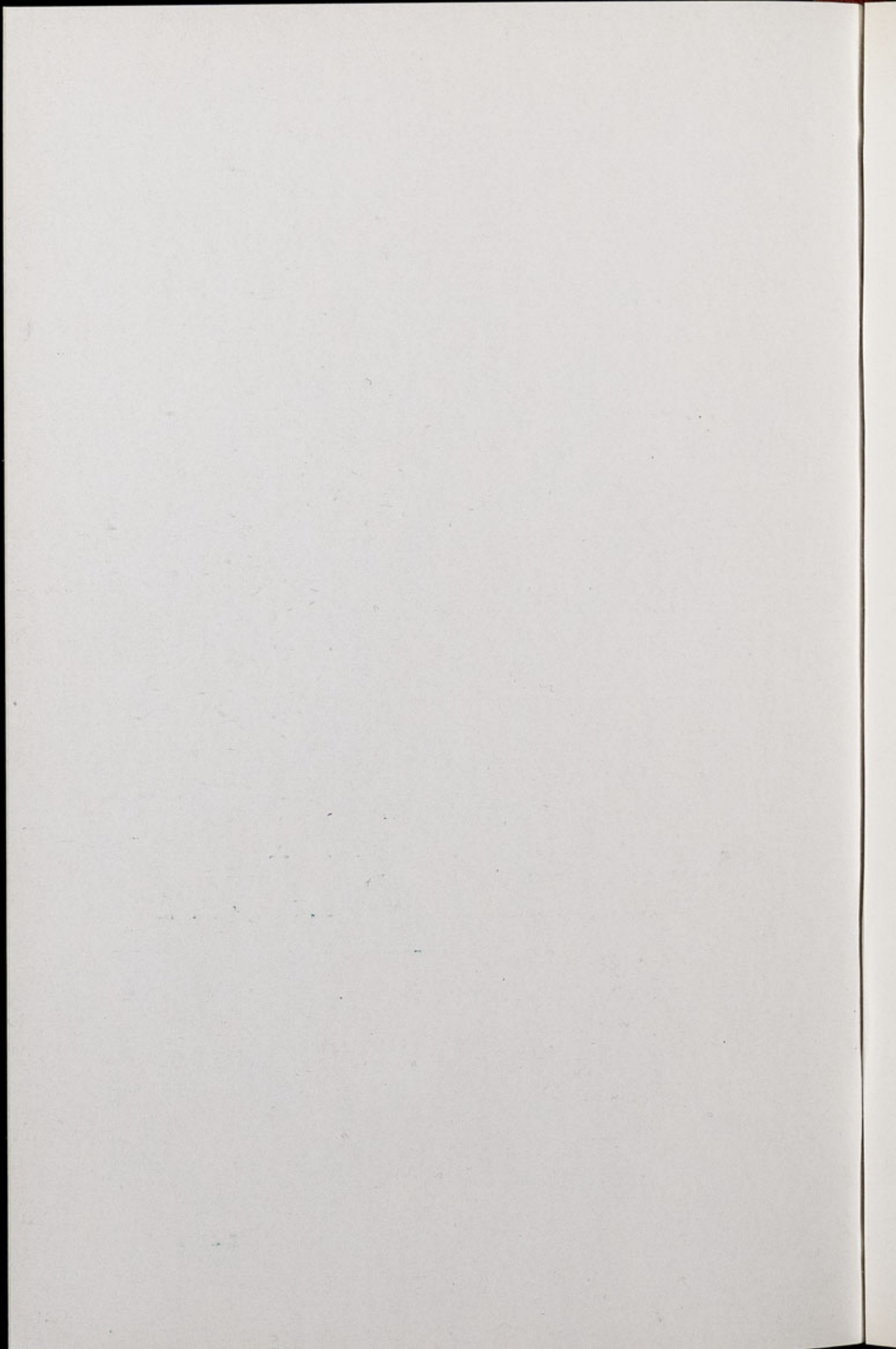
# Chester Zoo News

## *AND GUIDE*

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

September 1978

Price 12p



# The North of England Zoological Society

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER

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## COVER

Geoffroy's Cats

*By courtesy of K. W. Green, A.R.P.S.*

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Annual subscription — Two Pounds and Thirty Pence, postage paid  
Telephone Chester 20106/7/9

### RECENT BIRTHS

The following births were recorded recently:

- 1 Nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*)
- 1 Alpaca (*Lama pacos*)
- 1 Guanaco (*Lama guanicoe*)
- 1 Grant's Zebra (*Equus burchelli granti*)
- 1 Llama (*Lama glama*)
- 1 Bison (*Bos bison*)
- 1 Greater Kudu (*Tragelaphus strepsiceros*)
- 1 Wapiti (*Cervus canadensis*)

### GEOFFROY'S CATS

A pair of Geoffroy's Cats (*Felis geoffroyi*), have been received into the Collection, and can be seen on the cover of this issue. Very little is known about this small cat from South America. Studies have been made of breeding pairs but information upon their life in the wild is limited. The distribution is from Rio Grande do Sul to Santa Cruz in Patagonia and into South West Bolivia.

Dark spots and streaks cover the attractive background colours of silver-grey, brown-yellow, brown-black and a lovely light amber. Characteristics in all colour forms are the ear markings of black and brown on the back of the ear. These cats grow to approximately three feet in length, fifteen inches of which is tail.

Geoffroy's Cats are excellent climbers and swimmers and rest quietly on branches which they also use for ambushing unsuspecting birds. Their diet consists of small mammals such as rats, mice, agoutis and they will raid farms for chickens.

One to three cubs are born, usually once a year, and these are blind and furred at birth. When they reach about twelve weeks old they are reasonably independent of the female.

The pair which have arrived at Chester Zoo are very attractive and are only about eighteen months old. Once they have settled down there is a possibility that they will breed, although the exact age of sexual maturity in these felines is not known.

### GRANT'S ZEBRA

A female Grant's Zebra foal (*Equus burchelli granti*) was born on 12th August and can be seen in Enclosure 79. The Grant's Zebra is distinguished from other species by the wide, bold stripe covering the whole of the body and legs. Acute senses of sight, smell and hearing, together with a fast gallop protect this attractive animal from predators.

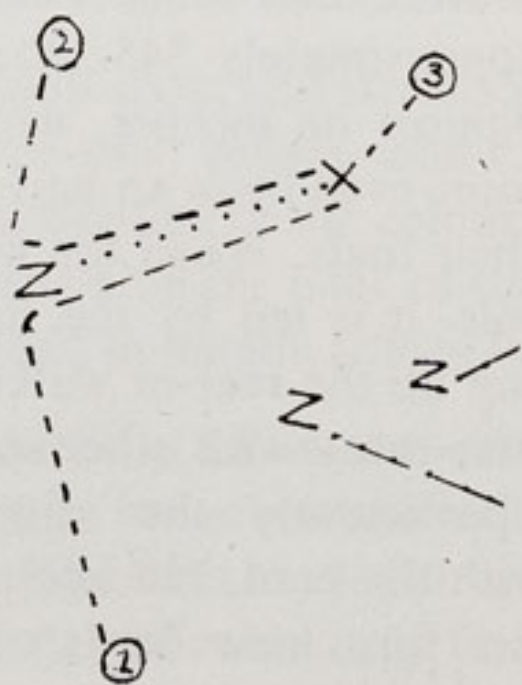
There are a number of different species of zebra but these never inter-breed. The various species live in different areas and the Grant's Zebra is found from Southern Sudan to Eastern Africa and the Upper Zambesi. Species found further South generally have less stripes together with deviations in the pigment of the skin, according to the area in which they are found.

Adult zebras live in family groups numbering approximately 10-12 individuals; old or sick stallions must avoid other males and are condemned to a somewhat solitary life. The group is made up of the stallion, the highest ranking mare and then other mares according to their position in the group, together with their foals. The foals are born after a gestation period of approximately 345-390 days. As soon as the young foal fully recognises its mother, which it appears to have very little difficulty in doing even from an early age, it will start to meet other zebras and their foals. When the herd is travelling to a feeding place or water-hole it is led by the highest ranking mare, the stallion either bringing up the rear or walking to the side. Although the zebra does not inter-breed with other species, it will mingle with other animals, particularly the migratory Wildebeest. Female foals usually stay with the herd, but adolescent males leave of their own accord to either form new herds or join other stallions in "bachelor" groups. The family group is very secure and will stay together for many years.

Fights between males are rarely fatal and in the majority of cases only break out when a strange stallion discovers a receptive mare in a herd; the stallion of the herd will defend his mares against the intruder. Any other fighting which breaks out is purely symbolic. Stallions are generally friendly towards one another and

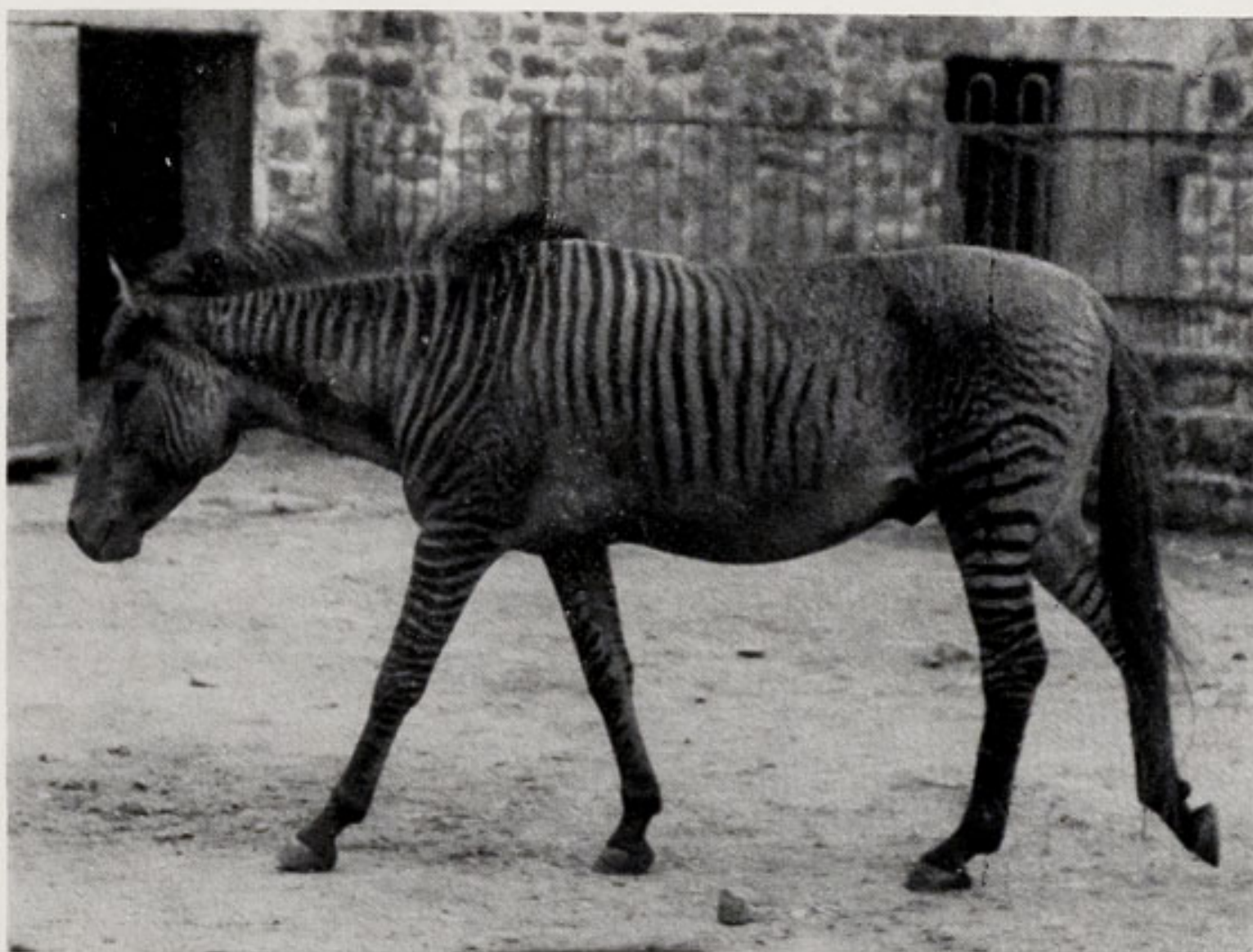
have their own code of recognition. Upon meeting, they will first sniff noses, bellies and then rub heads across one another's flanks; before parting, they sniff noses once more. Individuals can often be seen nibbling each others' shoulders and manes.

If the herd is attacked it will immediately split up and will not reform for several days. When they do reform they will call for other individuals if they appear to be lost; sometimes though, a member of the herd does not return. Zebras are often the prey of lions as they always have a well-fed appearance with their rounded hindquarters and bellies; it is easier for a lion to kill one zebra than two or three small antelope. The great speed of the zebra, unfortunately, can actually kill it! Lions are well-known for their ambushing techniques when stalking prey and a diagram below illustrates this. Lion 1 picks out the prey and stalks it, disregarding the remainder of the herd. Then, springing out of the undergrowth the lion chases the zebra; other zebras are now scattering in all directions. The intended prey, in its mad gallop for safety, runs unwittingly towards lions 2 and 3, the zebra desperately tries to change direction but, too late, it is pursued from all quarters and X marks the fatal moment.



So far as is known zebras have never been domesticated by Man, but they are easily looked after in captivity and are fed on the same diet as other equines. One advantage which would have been gained had zebras been domesticated is that they can withstand common African diseases, to which the horse can offer no resistance.

Although zebra-hybrids are never seen in the wild, a horse-zebroid can be seen at Chester Zoo in Enclosure 39. It is an attractive animal in an unusual way and is shown in the picture on page 5. Hybrids such as these often display characteristics not present in either parent; the dark line down the spine and across the shoulders known as the dorsal stripe is one such peculiarity. Another point, is that the zebroid is sterile and this is probably Nature's way of



ZEBROID *By courtesy of K. W. Green, A.R.P.S.*

protecting the species from too much inter-breeding and the possible development of deformities.

### TROPICAL HOUSE NEWS

The under-mentioned reptiles have been bred recently:

- 3 Madagascan Tree Boas (*Sanzinia madagascariensis*)
- 11 Carolina Pygmy Rattle-snakes (*Sistrurus miliarius m.*)

The following specimens have been received into the Collection and are now on show:

- 3 Diamond Pythons (*Morelia spilotes*)
- 1 Amethystine Python (*Liasis amethystinus*)
- 2 Shingle-backed Skinks (*Trachydosaurus rugosis r.*)
- 2 Blue-tongued Skinks (*Tiliqua scincoides s.*)
- 2 Bearded Dragons (*Amplibolurus barbatus b.*)
- 2 Macklot's Pythons (*Liasis mackloti*)
- 1 Green Tree Python (*Chondropython viridis*)
- 1 D'Alberti's Python (*Liasis fuscus albertisii*)
- 1 Royal Python (*Python regius*)
- 1 Indian Python (*Python molurus*)

Mr. Roger Ainsley, Curator of Reptiles, is responsible for creating the correct conditions required for individuals as listed previously. Many of them are valuable and rare specimens, and an eventual breeding is much more of an achievement when one has to introduce them to a new home and persuade them to settle down in unfamiliar surroundings. A breeding to be noted is that of the Madagascan Tree Boas. A pair of these arrived in Chester as babies in 1973. For the last two years mating had been observed and this year three healthy youngsters were produced. These snakes are an Endangered Species and it is hoped that this is just the first of many successful years of breeding to come. The youngsters are much more brightly coloured and marked than the parents, with black, white and a lovely brick red, but this will fade as they mature.

The Carolina Pygmy Rattlesnakes have bred for the third year. These grow to approximately 16-20 inches long, a greyish background displays dark blotches together with a reddish colour running along the length of the body. Distributed throughout South Carolina, Florida and westwards toward Oklahoma and Texas, the Pygmy Rattlesnake was not always treated with the respect it deserved. For some unknown reason, many people believed that they were not as dangerous as other larger "rattlers"; however, it has been proved that drop for drop this rattlesnake's venom is more poisonous than that of larger species. Correct handling of this specimen by experienced hands is required at all times.

The Shingle-backed Lizards can be found in all parts of Australia and are coloured according to the area in which they are living. This can range from grey to black with paler markings through to greyish brown with cream markings and also a lovely reddish brown with salmon pink blotches. They are also known by a variety of local names in Australia, such as Stumptailed Lizard and the Pine-cone Lizard. The latter name is due to the curious pine-cone arrangement of the thick, heavy scales and this is illustrated in the picture on page 7. Their sole means of defence is to open the mouth wide and hiss loudly, and hopefully, together with the protection of the tough scales, avoid danger.

Two live young are produced at a time and these are immediately independent, foraging for their own food. Shingle-backed Lizards are



*By courtesy of K. W. Green, A.R.P.S.*

SHINGLE-BACKED LIZARD

# CHESTER ZOO

THE NORTH OF ENGLAND  
ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

FOR A COMPLETE TOUR OF THE ZOO — Follow Nos 1-116 South Entrance  
or Nos 16-116 from North Entrance then return to Nos 1-14

**Chester Zoo is Open Daily  
from 9.00a.m. until dusk.**

To  
LECTURE HALL  
& CLASSROOM  
(Reservations Only)



C Road  
Warrington  
Manchester  
Whitchurch  
and South

**1. SOUTH ENTRANCE**

- 2. Peacock Enclosure
- 3. Wapiti Paddock
- 4. Coatî Enclosure
- 5. Aviaries
- 6. Milk Bar
- 7. CORONATION HALL
- 8. CLOAKROOM, FIRST AID, TOILETS, INVALIDS' TOILETS, MOTHER AND BABY ROOM
- 9. CAFETERIA
- 10. Picnic Lawn
- 11. Bears
- 12. Jubilee Gardens (Noah)
- 13. Kiosk
- 14. AQUARIUM
- 15. NORTH ENTRANCE
- 16. PUSH CHAIRS, WHEEL CHAIRS, LOST CHILDREN
- 17. PARROT HOUSE
- 18. Free Flight Aviary
- 19. APE HOUSE
- 20. Shop and Kiosk
- 21. Aviaries and Picnic Lawn
- 22. TOILETS
- 23. Tuatara Exhibit
- 24. Peccaries
- 25. Waterbus Halt
- 26. Birds of Prey Aviaries
- 27. Condor Aviary
- 28. Jackal and Hyaena Enclosures
- 29. Animal Enclosure
- 30. Porcupine Enclosure
- 31. Coypus
- 32. Beavers
- 33. Giraffe House

- 34. Camel House
- 35. Waterbus Halt
- 36. TROPICAL, NOCTURNAL & REPTILE HOUSES
- 37. CHIMPANZEES
- 38. Floribunda Rose Garden
- 39. Mammal House
- 40. Gibbon Island
- 41. H.T. Rose Garden
- 42. Aviaries
- 43. Flamingos
- 44. Waterfowl Enclosure
- 45. Waterfowl Enclosure
- 46. Waterfowl Enclosure
- 47. Penguins
- 48. Sealions
- 49. Rock Garden
- 50. Polar Bears
- 51. Big Cat Enclosure
- 52. Waterfowl Enclosure
- 53. Anteaters
- 54. BIRD HOUSE
- 55. FOUNTAIN RESTAURANT
- 56. Ape Nursery
- 57. TOILETS
- 58. Lions
- 59. SOUVENIR SHOP
- 60. TOILETS
- 61. OAKFIELD RESTAURANT

- 62. P.O. Telephone
- 63. Aviary
- 64. Animal Enclosure
- 65. Animal Enclosure
- 66. Ornamental Rock Garden
- 67. Wallabies and Kangaroos
- 68. Kangaroo Enclosure
- 69. Aviary
- 70. Cheetahs
- 71. WATERBUS BOOKING OFFICE AND KIOSK
- 72. Waterbus Halt
- 73. Fountain Flower Gardens
- 74. Rose Garden
- 75. Red Lechwe
- 76. Red Lechwe
- 77. Deer or Antelope Enclosure
- 78. Waterbus Halt
- 79. Zebra and Deer Enclosure
- 80. Brown Bears
- 81. ELEPHANTS
- 82. Hippos
- 83. Tapirs
- 84. Small Mammal House
- 85. Waterfowl Enclosure
- 86. Ankole Cattle
- 87. Emus, Cranes and Flamingos
- 88. Outside Monkey Enclosures
- 89. Baboon Pens
- 90. Cat House
- 91. Tiger Enclosures

- 92. Antelope Enclosure
- 93. Antelope Enclosure
- 94. Antelope Enclosure
- 95. Llamas
- 96. Zebras
- 97. Waterfowl Enclosure
- 98. Waterfowl Enclosure
- 99. Waterfowl Enclosure
- 100. Blackbird
- 101. Wallabies
- 102. Animal Enclosure
- 103. Wallabies
- 103a. Reindeer



**ANIMAL FEEDING TIMES:**

- LIONS—3 pm except Fridays
- BEARS—3-15 pm
- POLAR BEARS—4 pm
- SEA LIONS 3 times daily—  
2-30 pm, 3-30 pm, 4-30 pm

ANIMALS MAY BE MOVED  
FROM TIME TO TIME

- 104. Pere David's Deer Paddock
- 105. Przewalski's Horses
- 105a. Onager
- 106. Arabian Gazelles
- 107. Musk Oxen
- 108. Bison
- 109. Pere David's Deer Paddock
- 110. Prairie Marmots, Alpacas
- 111. Antelope Enclosure
- 112. RHINOS
- 113. TOILETS
- 114. Mpila Snack Bar
- 115. Antelope Enclosure
- 116. MONKEY HOUSE

unfortunately very partial to crops of strawberries and tomatoes and will gorge themselves on the ripe fruits at every opportunity. On other occasions, berries, blossom, soft fruits, insects and small snails are eaten. The Zoo diet consists of bananas, pears, chopped meat, raw egg, and added vitamins to help protect them from the skin diseases and parasites to which they are susceptible.

An interesting point to note is that the Shingle-backed Lizard has a rudimentary "third" or pineal-eye on the top of the large triangular head. This is more pronounced than that of the Tuatara (*Sphenodon punctatus*), often known as the "living fossil", which has lived to the present day from some 150,000,000 years ago. Nothing is known of the possible function of this gland. The Zoo is fortunate in having a pair of Tuataras in the Collection and these can be seen in Enclosure 23.

### AVIARY NEWS

The following birds have been bred recently:

- 3 Silverbills (*Lanchura malabarica*)
- 2 Red-rumped Parakeets (*Psephotus haemotodus*)
- 5 Nanday Conures (*Nandayus nanday*)
- 3 Lesser Patagonian Conures (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*)
- 2 Peach-faced Lovebirds (*Agapornis roseicollis*)
- 1 Blue-fronted Amazon (*Amazona aestiva*)
- 1 Green-naped Lorikeet (*Trichoglossus haemotod micropteryx*)
- 1 Fischer's Lovebird (*Agapornis fischeri*)
- 1 Guiana Parrotlet (*Forpus passerinus p.*)
- 3 Barn Owls (*Tyto alba*)

The following specimens have been received into the Collection:

- 2 Blue-streaked Lory (*Eos reticulatus*)
- 1 Little Owl (*Athene noctua*)
- 2 Yellow-fronted Parakeets (*Cyanoramphus auriceps*)
- 2 Red-fronted Parakeets (*Cyanoramphus novaezelandiae*)
- 1 Yellow-fronted Amazon (*Amazona ochrocephala*)

## BIRD SPECIMENS—cont'd.

- 3 Cockatiels (*Nymphicus hollandicus*)
- 2 White-headed Nuns (*Munia maja*)
- 3 Zebra Finches (*Taeniopygia castanotis*)
- 1 Spice Bird (*Munia punctulata*)
- 1 Red-eared Waxbill (*Estrilda troglodytes*)
- 1 Cut-throat Finch (*Amadina fasciata*)
- 1 Golden Pheasant (*Chrysolophus pictus*)
- 1 Emperor Goose (*Anser canagicus*)
- 1 Plum-headed Parakeet (*Psittacula cyanocephale*)
- 2 Maroon-tailed Parakeets (*Pyrrhura melanura chapmani*)

Of the three Barn Owls listed above, one was hand-reared and credit must be given to the people involved. If this individual had not been hand-reared it is almost certain that the mother would not have been able to care for all three youngsters.

## THE OWL

Many superstitions surround the owl and these probably arose many years ago when its skilful hunting of prey and ability to see on the darkest nights was not appreciated. Possibly the serrated edges to the wing feathers for silent flying, together with the large facial disc which forms a part of the owl's complicated hearing system have contributed to the old adage of this birds' wisdom which has now become a legend.

Owls' bodies, feathers and eggs were believed to have various medicinal properties. Aborigines believed that owls protected the souls of women, whilst the Chinese accused owls of stealing human souls. In Sicily, the Scops owl, if found near a sick man's house, heralded the death of the invalid, and in France a shrieking owl is said to mark the birth of a girl. The owl is universally recognised and this recognition goes hand in hand with the superstitions and fears which surround this nocturnal bird of prey.

Described in this article are two species of owl, the Barn Owl

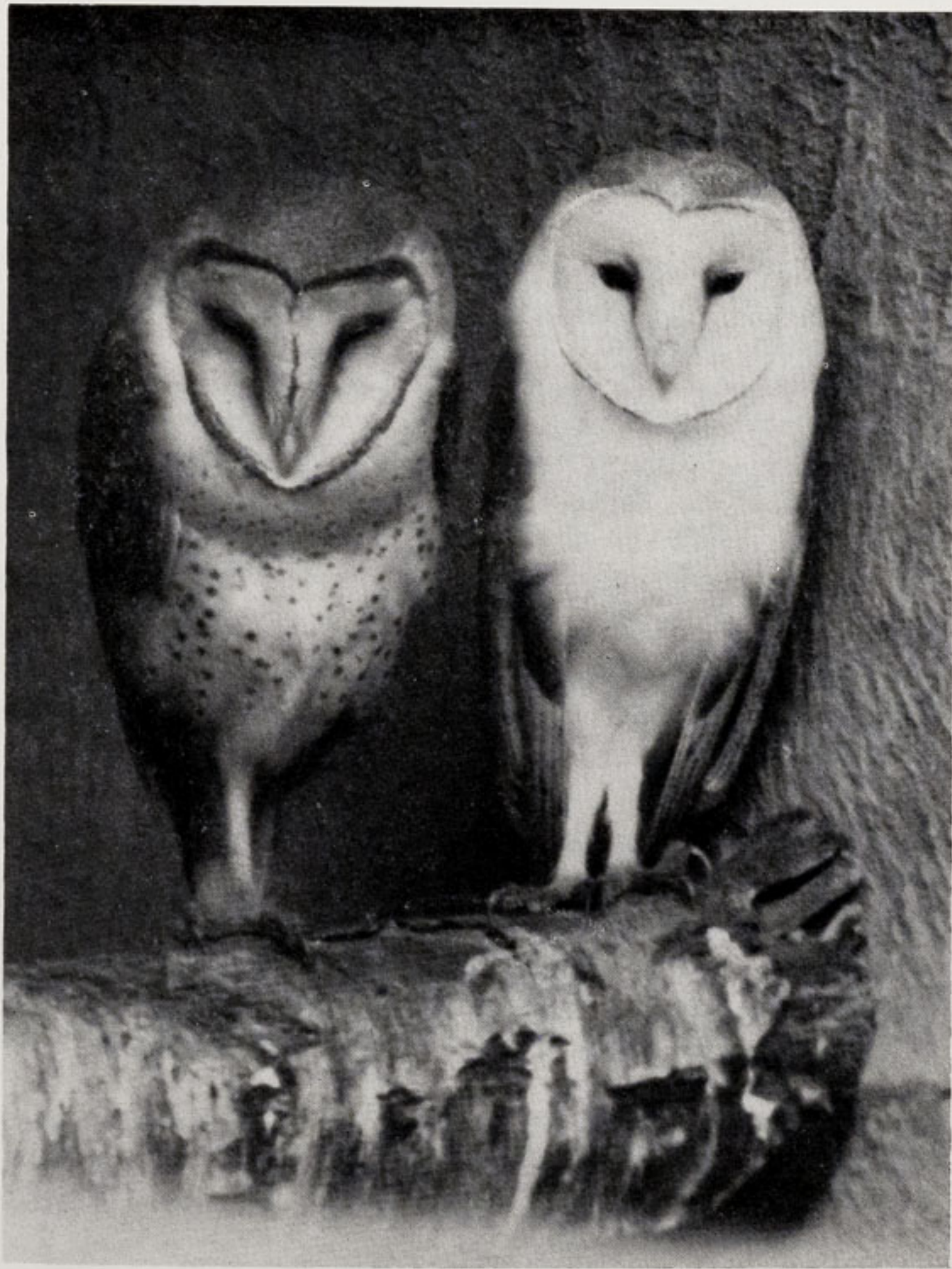
(*Tyto alba*), which is one of the world's most well known species, and the Little Owl, named in Latin after a goddess (*Athene noctua*). Although both owls, they differ in many ways and give an insight into one of wildlife's wonders.

The Barn Owl, often known as the Common or White-breasted Barn Owl, can be seen in the picture on page 13. The upper parts are an attractive orange-buff, spotted with dark grey. The face and under-parts are generally white, but are occasionally speckled black, and the facial disc is heart-shaped, as opposed to the low-browed appearance of the Little Owl.

Old ruins, churches, barns and lofts provide a home and roosting place for this owl during the daylight hours. If the owl should venture out during this time it will almost certainly be mobbed by groups of small birds.

During the night though, the Barn Owl flies many miles, back and forth, scanning the area with well developed forward-facing eyes. The flight is almost noiseless as it glides to and fro on large soft wings and then it drops, like a dead weight—down on to its prey. It is said that the intended victim, seeing its attacker coming toward it, is petrified. Small rodents, shrews, mice, voles, rats and small rabbits all come under the ever watchful eye of this skilful night hunter. The prey is generally eaten whole, unless it is too large. The indigestible parts such as bones, fur, claws, teeth and seed husks are also eaten but later regurgitated as large, black pellets—the hard parts being covered in fur and feathers. Bats, frogs and large insects will also be eaten, and occasionally sparrows, which are snatched from their resting places.

This owl is a popular bird with farmers as it eats many rodents; farmers often provide nesting boxes for the birds in the hope that this will encourage them to stay. Despite this, very little is known of its mating habits and the fact that the owl does not build a nest makes it a little more difficult to investigate these rituals. Dark crevices and hollows are favoured for the incubation and hatching of the 3-7 pure white eggs, which are laid at 48 hour intervals. The male feeds the female during the period of incubation, which lasts for about 33 days. When the chicks hatch they are covered in a lovely thick white



*By courtesy of K. W. Green, A.R.P.S.*

BARN OWLS

down, but eventually this is replaced by the full adult plumage. Chicks which hatch first have the best chance of survival and within twelve weeks the young cannot be distinguished from their parents.

The three closely-related species which form the genus *Athene* are known as the Little Owls. They cover a wide variety and range of habitats in Asia and Europe from parklands to semi-desert; mountain and forest areas are avoided.

This owl was introduced into Britain during the latter part of the 19th century. Little Owls, as the name indicates, are small, and the plumage is a dull grey-brown colour mottled and barred with white. An unusual "flat-headed" appearance gives this attractively marked bird a disapproving expression and the writer has observed the characteristic bobbing up and down of the head familiar to this genus.

During April and May 3-5 eggs are laid in tree cavities, or holes in walls and cliffs; these are small, oval and white. When the chicks hatch after approximately 29 days the male feeds them but later the female assists. The diet consists of insects, beetles, rats, rabbits, and occasionally sparrows and blackbirds.

The hunting method is slightly different from that of the Barn Owl, which hunts whilst flying. The Little Owl perches and waits for movement and noises below; if it does not catch its prey when swooping down on to it the Little Owl is quite content to settle on the ground and give chase as it can run quite quickly! The Little Owl, unlike the Barn Owl, can be detected by its loud musical call.

The Little Owl can be observed in the Nocturnal House, which is incorporated in the Tropical House.

### GARDENING NOTES

Although there has been very little sun this Summer the flower beds have been very good. This season was completely different from the drought of 1976. The heavy falls of rain made it difficult to keep

the lawns mown and some had to be left as long as two weeks before they were dry enough to be cut.

The sun-loving flowers such as Verbena, Heliotrope and Lantana do not like so much dull, wet weather but they soon show their brilliance again after a dry period. The border of Petunia by the Sea Lions was not as showy as it should have been and with this being a dry border it was intended that it should be one of the most colourful.

The elevated trough in the Bird House was planted with a mixture of Petunia, Lobelia and Ivy-Leaved Geranium Variety Charles Turner. This is very colourful and shows up well with the plants trailing down the sides of the trough. Also in the Bird House are hanging baskets of Fuchsia. The Fuchsia in the border and those grown as Standards have been very good this year, with plenty of growth and flowers. Most Summers the Gardeners have to go round once a week to water the Standards and dot plants but this year there has been no need to do this since the middle of July.

The Antirrhinums started to flower later this year but the flower spikes have been very good and there is little sign of the rust disease.

The Geraniums have had too much rain and there is more growth than flower but the variegated varieties still make a colourful border. The Gardeners were able to take plenty of cuttings from the Geraniums in August without spoiling the appearance of the flower beds. 12,000 cuttings are taken during August of various plants which have to be rooted now for next year's Summer bedding.

In spite of spraying the Roses, Black Spot, which causes the leaves to drop off, is troublesome this year among some varieties. Mildew is not such a problem though.

The Willows on the islands which were "polled" earlier this year have produced a large amount of young growth. The shoots are now two to three feet long and have made a good shape. Each year the trees will be pruned to a reasonable size so that the minimum of debris falls into the waterways.

This wet season has produced a great deal of growth on the shrubs; no doubt much pruning will be needed in the winter months to keep them in shape and prevent them from overcrowding.

A very good specimen of the tree *Dracaena draco* was presented, which is very much appreciated. It is five feet tall and has been planted in the Tropical House. A label with its name and information has been placed nearby. The common name is Dragon Tree; this species can be seen in many places in the Canary Islands. A famous Dragon Tree which, it is claimed, is 3,000 years old is growing near Tenerife.

Inside the Tropical House the climber *Clerodendron splendens* has clusters of scarlet flowers hanging down and is beautiful at present. Also, a young plant of *Plumeria bicolor*, common name *Frangipani*, has flowered. The white and yellow flowers are highly-scented; perfume is extracted from them.

### SUBSCRIPTIONS

New readers of the CHESTER ZOO NEWS who would like to receive the magazine regularly may be interested to know that subscription forms can be obtained from the souvenir shops. An annual subscription (12 issues) costs £2.30, postage paid, which can either be handed over the counter at the shops or posted with the completed form to the Director-Secretary, Chester Zoo, Chester.



**The following notice is displayed on several boards in the grounds  
Please comply with it at all times**

### **FEEDING OF ANIMALS AND BIRDS**

**IT IS AN OFFENCE** for any member of the public to offer food of any description to any Animal or Bird in Chester Zoo.

This regulation is made for the sake of the health of the Animals and Birds. Since the **NO FEEDING** rule was introduced, the number of deaths has dropped appreciably and sickness due to wrong feeding has been virtually eliminated.

What you may be offering to an animal may only be a sweet or an inoffensive piece of bread, but it can mean a death sentence for the animal. For example, a cough drop, which may relieve your cough, can cause instant death to many Animals and Birds in the Zoo.

You must not lose sight of the fact that you are only one of over a million visitors who visit the Zoo annually. If for instance an elephant had one bun from only one tenth of a day's visitors during the summer, it would eat between three and four thousand. You can guess the result.

We realise what a temptation it is for visitors, particularly children, to feed our Animals and Birds and this is why we invite members of the public to be present at the official feeding times.

This is a polite warning to you, asking you not to feed the animals. If you ignore it, the Keepers are authorised to ask you to leave the Gardens.

**If you really love Animals and Birds, you will appreciate the wisdom of the ruling — No feeding by members of the public.**

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ANIMALS NOT ONLY ALIVE BUT IN FIRST CLASS  
CONDITION**

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