



“Our Zoo News”

and Guide.

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

Price 3d.

Annual Subscription 4/6d. post free.

NUMBER 104.

JUNE, 1950.



Photo by the courtesy of D. Shore.

Obviously—“Two’s company, but three are a bit of a crowd”.

The above photograph of three seals in the Sea Lion Enclosure, has won considerable commendation for Mr. Shore in photographic circles.

The North of England Zoological Society,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 21898.

June, 1950.

The Twilight Hour.

This month I would like to tell the readers something about the animal world of the Zoo in that quiet hour at the end of a long day, crowded with so many impressions—when a hush seems to fall upon us all—the witching hour of twilight. It is a time peculiar to this beloved Island of ours—for only in England occurs that so gradual fading of the daylight—the hour—before night falls.

This is the end of a long and gloriously sunny day in June, when only the gentlest of breezes has rustled the beautiful trees that spread their kindly shade throughout the Zoo Gardens. All day long it has been the voice en masse of the visitors that has been predominant—the animals seeming to become mute as we grew noisier. The thought occurred to me at the height of the day, that it was almost as if we had changed places with the animals (stolen their show perhaps), and they had become our interested spectators. Then the illusion passed because mostly, our friends big and little, seemed to realize the role they were expected to play and did their best to please all those who came here to view them. Those who could be fed, indicated unmistakably, their willingness to co-operate with the idea. For instance, Molly and Baba (our two Elephants) were quite ready to relinquish the odd branch of a tree with which they had been whisking the path ahead of them, to catch up the proffered bun. The Sea Lions seemed, as always, to have the most insatiable appetite for herrings, which it is difficult to believe they even taste, so swiftly do these disappear down their throats, and if you were not extremely careful near the Zebra enclosure—Rusty had no compunction about trying to help himself to a portion of your anatomy, at the same time as he dealt with any tasty morsel that was offered to him, with more enthusiasm than caution on the part of the donor.

Gradually as the sun's rays grew longer, the crowds began to thin and this meant that we

could all once more relax and, if inclined, give full attention to the animals. I wonder if they are perhaps, sharing my feelings at the end of this sunny day that has obviously been so successful from their admirers point of view. Every effort has been made to present them in the best possible conditions, and this has brought vast and appreciative crowds. Have they thought their audience as quaint, amusing and even ugly, as possibly we have thought them?

Personally, I need very little convincing that the "King of Beasts", relaxed in his large enclosure, is quite contemptuous of us—for when he does deign to pay any attention to what goes on beyond the confines of his miniature world, it is either to glance with utter boredom in our direction or glare with such ferocity that we can have little doubt how effectually he would deal with us, given any opportunity.

Once during to-day, whose twilight hour has found me sketching a word picture of the Zoo for you, I wandered a little off the beaten track, where the crowds were not quite so thick—by the rabbit enclosure, and I stood there long enough to realise that we do not always need a "twilight hour" to conjure up before our eyes, a world of charming fantasy. I observed with great interest, the comings and goings of an important looking member of the rabbit fraternity, when suddenly I felt that at any minute Lewis Carroll's classic character would come to life and I should see the little fellow get up on his hind legs, whip out a watch and utter the well known phrase "oh my ears and whiskers, how late its getting!" A quotation that brought me sharply back to earth. Like "Alice", the hot noon day sun had certainly been playing tricks with me—to be dreaming a little of "Alice in Wonderland"



The Puma snarls his defiance at the photographer. By permission of Wirral Photo Co.

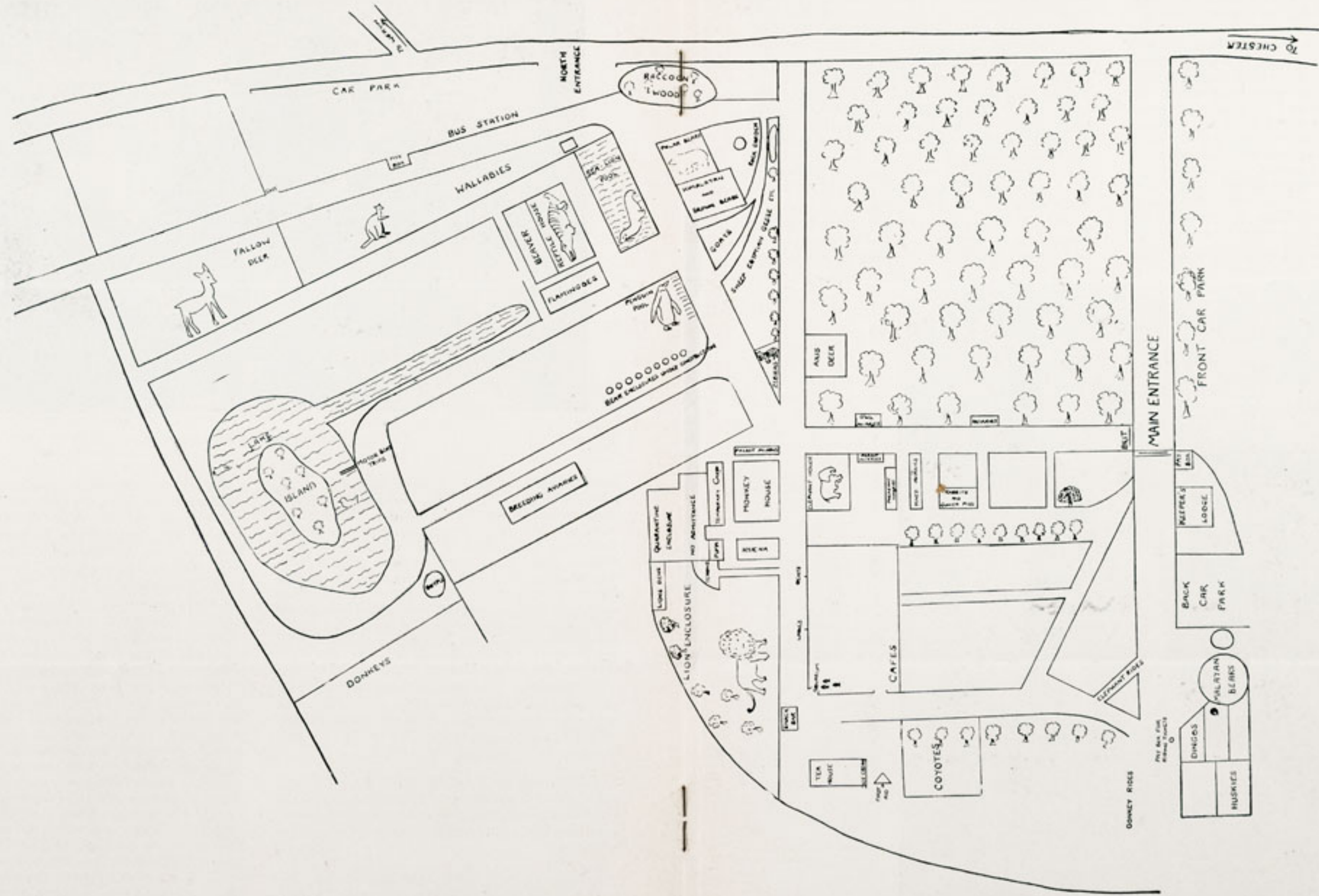
bang in the middle of a busy day, when the main exhibits in the Zoo had never seemed more popular—whatever next. So I pressed on with the job in hand, promising myself the peace and tranquility of the twilight hour that now is mine, to record for you a perfect June day at the Zoo. But for the next few hours there was the child who was lost, to comfort and care for, an equally distressed parent to calm, whilst I endeavoured to locate the wandering offspring, then a slight casualty to be directed to the First Aid tent.

So time has passed—and now my allotted task completed, I am free to let my mind roam back over the incidents of the day giving them perhaps, a magic they did not really possess, because this is the "witching hour".

Wandering down to the Sun Bears Enclosure, I found that Sally and Teena had abandoned their high perch in the tree, where they are so often to be seen enjoying the last rays of the setting sun.

Across the way from here is, the now deserted, Elephant Stand, and once more for me, the air is full of the gay sound of children's excited laughter—I can see quite plainly, Molly

plodding her dignified course, topped by the precious cargo of youngsters, whose expressions clearly indicate the thrill of this experience. Behind her presses Baba, so impatient of Molly's slow gait, her youthful outlook scorns the sober wisdom of her senior—it is obvious that given any say in the matter, Baba would speed up the proceedings considerably. Even as I smile indulgently at the thought of Baba, I mentally applaud the policy of the Mahout who so carefully keeps Molly in the lead, his sharp commands in hindustani have all merged into the atmosphere of the place. If life has taught me nothing else, I have learned not to cling overmuch to the present—for memories are always better—in memory we have everything, even the smallest details that so often escaped us at the time. In this spot, now almost deserted, I am recalling the long queues of children, all shapes and sizes waiting for their ride on the Elephant or Donkeys. The latter's enthusiastic riders seemed powerless to produce any response in their mokes, livelier than a leisurely amble round the field but this apparently, in no wise impaired the popularity of the idea—much to the Donkeys' annoyance I suspect, who no doubt, would have much preferred to call the whole thing off.



Plan of Chester Zoological Gardens

So I wander on towards the Pheasant Aviaries and here for the moment the picture is marred by the litter strewn about the lawns that early this morning looked so fresh and inviting. Atmosphere has to be very potent to eliminate the effect of the carelessness and indifference of human beings to beauty, cleanliness and order. But even such things in their way, play their part as mute witnesses to the day that is past, and as I let gentler thoughts prevail, the twilight softens all harsh outlines. Mentally I have turned my back on all that is ugly and there instead are the Peacocks, although now gone to roost in the nearby trees, once more in memory, are spreading their marvellous tails in front of me, turning and twisting with such pride and dignity—how inspired is the statement "as proud as a Peacock".

I notice the Guinea Fowl taking a last look

round, before getting down to roost with their new found friends the Palliase Pheasants. Their wings seem to grow almost as soon as they're clipped and on my way to the Zoo early this morning, I was astonished to see a little flock of the Zoo's specimens, trotting along the main road, looking very much as though they were out visiting—on making enquiries later, I was informed that when they do break out in this unorthodox fashion, they always return to the main gate in due course chirping away, for admission in unmistakable "fowl" language—the Zoo to them is home in any language. All these things I remember, as I say a silent goodnight to my feathered friends and wander on my way.

There has been a brief pause at the Elephant House to see Molly and Baba now happily munching a well earned supper of sweet hay.



By permission of Wirral Photo Co.

One of our Polar Bears makes short work of a loaf of bread.

A fleeting glance into the Tiger Enclosure looking silent and a little sinister in the half light, much more suggestive of a Tiger's haunt really, than in the midday sun. I wonder if Cheka and Sultan lurk in the deep shadows or if they are safe in their dens.

Then for a quick look in the Monkey House where our dear little pals the baby Chimps. (what a family of them), are busily and happily making short work of their oranges, grapes, etc., and learning so quickly to use well, a mug to drink from. The Chimps., Monkeys and the Gibbon (whose tenor solos are a feature of the Zoo), all convey their awareness that the day is ending.

The bears, Trotsky, Belinda and Patsy, are just making sure they haven't overlooked any attractive tit-bit, but there is an unmistakable laziness about their movements, and so it is wherever I look, the Zoo is going to sleep.

The three Sea Lions who have been deposited in the care of the Zoo and whom I privately identify to myself as "Winkin', Blinkin' and Nod"—because of their marked preference for snoozing at all angles on a flat piece of rock, are completely hidden in the depths of their temporary home with our own disgracefully fat, petted and spoiled members of the species, Sammy and Susie. I cherish a not very secret hope that we may eventually own "Winkin', Blinkin' and Nod", so obvious is it that they have not known such happiness and contentment for a long time. I like to believe that this lovely pool represents to them a sort of "Seals Heaven"—at least that's what their habitually ecstatic expression would seem to indicate.

Lastly, my twilight stroll is richly rewarded with a glimpse of the Crested Porcupines—the first since they went into their new home on the rocky side of the now nearly completed Polar Bear Enclosure. Timidly they emerge and almost fearfully glance around and seem to be saying, "thank goodness the curious folk have gone on their way, we can put up with one solitary stroller but, oh dear, those awful crowds nearly falling in here, in their efforts to discover us—but they didn't and here we are, safe and sound with supper all laid out ready" and with great relish they are soon tucking into a "Porcupine Entree" of raw potatoes, etc. I have been so disappointed that these lovely creatures absolutely refuse to be exhibited—preferring to sleep 12 to 14 hours a day—but a new location for their home is under consideration and we are hoping it will then be possible to view them in a less obvious fashion than in their present enclosure.

So, as nightshades gently fall, I too think of home and rest, but never without wondering what will be new and exciting in the Zoo tomorrow and remembering in this twilight hour, all the tired and happy children who shared the Zoo with me to-day—and all those who will do so I hope, on many to-morrows.

N. J. BRUSHETT.

News Flashes.

We have to report a record Whitsuntide attendance, our gate figures for the week totalling nearly 37,000. Like all other Zoos, who feared the adverse weather reports might deter the public, we can only record that they came in their thousands throughout the Bank Holiday week-end.

We are sorry to have to announce, through a series of unavoidable delays, the postponement of the official opening of our new Polar Bear Enclosure, until Friday, 14th July. Arrangements are now going ahead to make this important occasion a very great success. Miss Gwen Pain of the B.B.C. is performing the opening ceremony and we advise our readers to watch the local press for announcements in connection with this event.

We have to report the birth of two baby Fallow Deer and, at the time of going to press, they are all doing well. There is no doubt they will quickly make friends with our infant Wallabies, who are already very much at home in the Fallow Deer Enclosure.

We are just about on speaking terms with five new arrivals: Babu, Elmer, Wilfred, Solomon and Simon, baby Chimpanzees who flew in last week from Sierre Leone (West Africa). They have managed to catch nasty colds en route, but we are thankful to say they are responding well to M. and B. tablets and a diet of grapes, orange juice, etc., and the devoted nursing of their keeper. We hope to have much more to tell you about these characters in due course.

Our two abandoned babies—Lucky, the lion cub, and Pokey, the Porcupine, continue to thrive and develop satisfactorily. Lucky in particular gives a terrific performance each night at the head of the stairs—as he tries to impress us with his efforts to produce a roar that will be spine chilling enough to command instant attention.

Expected are a number of very fine specimens to add to our collection, about mid-July, and we hope to include some details of these in our next edition.

News from other Zoos.

EDINBURGH.

Things on the whole have been much quieter, although we have had large consignments of smaller exhibits, including four species of Tree Frogs entirely new to the collection, some Spanish Eyed Lizards, a Spectacular Cayman and some Giant Crickets.

The Penguins duly arrived (26 in all) and they are in the best condition of any so far received in the Park after such an arduous journey. In the old Penguin Pond, both the Gentus and Tock-hoppers are laying and we feel rather excited about the latter because it is the one species we have ever kept that we have failed to breed successfully although eggs have been hatched infrequently in the past. The King Penguins are obviously pairing up but it is too early in the year to expect results from this species.

A small consignment of birds was received from the Gold Coast, the most spectacular of which were Violet Plantain-eaters and Gold Coast Touracos. There was also a Bosman's Potto but, of course, it rarely puts itself on show.

A large consignment has been promised by Canadian National Parks but this is not expected for about two months. We are also expecting some exhibits on an exchange basis from New York Zoo, of which we hope to be able to give you further details in the next issue.

BRISTOL.

Contrary to expectations in view of the discouraging weather reports, the Society has enjoyed a record Whitsun. 50,085 people visited the Gardens during the period Saturday to Wednesday out of which 22,297 came on Whit Monday alone.

To crown this successful week-end a baby was born to the Chimpanzee Jill. Jill is about twelve years old and together with her com-

panion Betty, has been with us just over a year on permanent deposit from the Dudley Zoo. The father, Johnnie Walker, is about seventeen years old and has been in our collection since 1938. He has been temporarily parted from Jill in case of accidents, but Betty, who appears to have settled down contentedly to the role of aunt, remains with her. The baby is the third born in the Gardens, the first one, Adam, also being the first to be reared in the country.

A lady from Northampton had a young sloth bear, which owing to altered domestic arrangements, she was unable to keep during the summer months. She accordingly asked if we could find room for him; we were only too pleased to do so. Simon was brought to us by his mistress complete with cage, sleeping quarters and rocking chair, also a broom and one or two other oddments he has been accustomed to play with. For quite a long time, Simon, who has always been looked after by women, did not exactly love his keepers and at first refused to eat, but he has now recovered his spirits and plays happily in front of an admiring public.

Among recent acquisitions, are two fifteen foot anacondas and a pair of squirrel monkeys from British Guiana. From the same source, we have also obtained a Red-and-Yellow Macaw, two Dufresnes Amazon Parrots, a Little Dusky Parrot and a few humming birds. The latter are displayed in our plant house, where, separated from visitors by an invisible glass window, they are at liberty to fly about amongst the late spring display of schizanthus and calceolarias. Unfortunately, for their size, they are pugnacious little birds and casualties occur.

Readers may be interested to learn the fate of the ostrich eggs. Those we attempted to incubate ourselves turned out to be infertile. The others, spurned by the ostrich family, were despatched to the authorities at Whipnade who had been kind enough to offer to incubate them for us. We have not yet heard with what result.