

"OUR ZOO NEWS"

Number Eleven

September 1938

We are, according to the calendar nearing the end of summer, and soon all our efforts will have to be turned towards making the inmates of the Zoo comfortable for the winter.

Strictly speaking we have had no summer weather, here and there one or two bright days, but the weather which we and the animals have all needed has never arrived, and the deficiency of beneficial rays we have all missed will to some extent have to be made good by other means.

Apart from the loss from a health point of view, the loss from gate receipts is considerable, therefore the burden on the Society is great in every respect. We are pleased to report that our gate this year is up on last year, but not as much as is required to place us on the right side of the balance sheet. We have still one month to go, and all we can do is work hard and hope for the best.

His Grace the Duke of Westminster very kindly offered to open the Gardens at Eaton on the 28th August in aid of the Society's funds, but unfortunately the weather was very unfavourable.

We are glad to report the young Tiger continues to improve, here again much better progress might have been made with nicer weather.

Our stock of monkeys still increases, and we have been compelled to transfer the African Grey Parrots to another large aviary, and convert their old aviary into a Monkey cage. Apart from being a case of necessity, we are hoping to be able to study the animals adaptation to these new conditions.

2.

The latest arrival in the monkey class is a pair of White Collared Mangabeys from Sir Donald Kingdon, this brings our stock of this variety to five, their rather unique colouration gives them a very attractive appearance.

The Aquarium can again boast this month of several large families, the most outstanding being Aequidens Curviceps.

The most recent addition in the way of new fish are some young Neon Tetras, which have been very kindly given by Miss. G. Russell Allen. These fish are distinctive in their colouration, giving the effect of a neon light.

Kiki and Tarzana are now in their new home, the way they entered it was most amusing. A strong brick wall some 14 inches thick divided the new home from the old one. A few bricks were removed from the side opposite to the one on which the Chimpanzees were.

During the time these bricks were being removed Kiki would keep going to the wall and feeling it with both hands. She kept her eyes on it as if she were expecting something to happen. The moment the first brick on their side came out was the end of all human hammering, both Chimpanzees took possession of the job and refused to let anyone approach the hole even from the other side.

It was only a matter of minutes before they had the hole large enough to get through, and everyone had to make a quick exit.

How they inspected that home was really wonderful, every bar was tested in turn, all nuts were examined, the doors were tried, and finally by placing both feet firmly against the base of the 2 inch bars they used all their strength to try and bend them.

3.

There is no doubt they realised that if they could but bend the bars a fraction they would be able to squeeze through, and after each effort they would try and force their bodies between the bars to see if they had given at all; but this house has been built to hold them, and we hope we have succeeded in doing so.

After Kiki and Tarzana had passed through to their new home, we let Mary through to see what she would do regarding the hole in the wall.

It seems hardly credible, but nevertheless it is a fact, that after surveying the new cage which will be her new home, she took the hammer which Kiki had left behind, and commenced trimming the bricks, then started to fit them back into the hole. Realising that something ought to go between the bricks, she gathered up in her hands the old mortar and trickled it among them. A very strange point was this (and she definitely seemed to understand what she was doing) some of the bricks which had faced Kiki's cage were painted green, these bricks she placed with the green facing the way they had done originally, so as to match the wall.

The new Chimpanzee cages are considerably larger, much lighter and contain no wood at all, being built entirely of concrete and iron.

Underneath threequarters of the floor, and running through the concrete are several hot-water pipes which make the floor warm, and counteracting the cold of the cement. The space between the animals and the public has been considerably increased owing to the fact that the Chimpanzees can reach to a full arms length through the bars.

4.

The Crowned Cranes have grown their wings this year much quicker than former years, and two enjoyed a brief period of liberty in the vicinity of the Zoo. They looked very striking as they flew overhead, their great wings carrying them with an ease one hardly realises when they are simply strutting round their enclosures.

Not many visitors realise how well Cranes can fly, and if they are not pinioned they have to be under constant observation.

Unlike the Pelicans, the Cranes when at liberty wander about independently, whereas the Pelicans hardly ever leave the neighbourhood of the house where they know fish can be obtained.

Since the arrival of the Crowned Crane announced in our last issue, these birds have become exceedingly noisy and they can often be heard trumpeting at the top of their voices. The reason we cannot explain, but they certainly equal their pen-companions the Peacocks, with their loud prolonged calls.

Zoo Characters.

"Billy, the Goat".

Billy needs no introduction to visitors to the Zoo, he is one of the first animals to be met, and if by any chance you should stand too close to the wire, he will introduce a pair of horns into the salutations.

5.

Billy arrived at the Zoo nearly two years ago, brought one afternoon, and handed over to the staff as food for the Lions, but whether it was the look in his eye or not, we do not know, somehow no one had the heart to cast him to such a fate, and his life was spared.

Now the very thought of such a thing would bring shame to our very hearts. Billy knows this and walks about with an air of nobility which strikes all visitors, even if his head does not strike you in a more sensitive spot.

As a beggar he is not well accomplished, and cares not two hoots if his mate does anything or not. The way he looks over the wall at the Malayan Bears being fed at once rouses pity and soon he is in receipt of such dainties himself.

The Annual General Meeting which was called for August 17th could not proceed with the business as a quorum was not present, the meeting therefore had to stand adjourned till Wednesday the 7th September 1938, at 8.30 p.m.

Members will have received a ballot paper asking them to vote for the most convenient time and day in each month on which to hold meetings of the Society for the discussion of matters of interest to the Society, and the holding of lectures and talks.

Once again we appeal for more members, true we have done well, but that is no reason why we should not do better. Our membership is 226, if we could double it our position would indeed be a happy one. Particularly at this time we could do with more Patrons, Benefactors, and Founders, and we earnestly hope that readers will help us in this direction, and give the Zoo a help which it needs at this period more than any other time.

We are sending out with this news a leaflet for prospective members together with an application form, and we hope that a great number of these will be returned duly completed.

Some people say that this is the wrong time to join, but don't forget that persons joining now receive the benefit of the remainder of this year free, as they will not be liable for their next subscription until January 1940. Another point in favour of joining now is, there are many days in the winter when a very pleasant day can be spent at the Zoo.

There are special rooms for members, and if the day should be cold or wet there is always plenty of interest under cover.

First there is the Aquarium which is full of interest, and now that the Chimpanzee House has been joined to the main block of buildings, visitors can proceed from the Chimpanzees to the small mammals, past the Mandrills and other Monkeys, to the Lion House without getting wet.

We are developing the Zoo as an all the year round and all weather Zoo. The animals appreciate visitors, and it is up to us to try and meet their wants. You can do this by making the Zoo a popular autumn and winter outing.
