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“Our Zoo News”  
and Guide.



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American Bison photographed in the Zoo some years ago and new specimens of which are expected to arrive shortly.

# The North of England Zoological Society,

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER.

Tel. Chester 21898.

February / March, 1951.

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## Winter Notes.

Now that winter is well advanced and we are hoping with regard to really bad weather, rapidly drawing to a close, there will be an opportunity to get on with the large amount of work still remaining to be done before the Zoo season starts at Easter. Since the end of last season a lot of work has been undertaken and completed and even now early visitors will see many new developments and attractions.

The main problem facing us at the close of the 1950 season was the provision of accommodation for all the animals and birds which had arrived at the Zoo in the latter half of the year. A number of the animals of course, have had to do a period of quarantine and therefore, the question of housing was not quite so urgent in their case, but now that the quarantine periods are coming to an end we shall have to work hard to get them all into their proper quarters by the end of March or beginning of April.

It is our intention to transfer the coyotes to another suitable site on the north side of the Zoo and utilise their roomy enclosure as a home for our Cheetahs, as we feel these animals need a lot of space and in this enclosure they will not only have plenty of this, but also enjoy tree shelter and lots of sunshine.

As many of our readers know, the zebras have now all been put together in the Zebra House which is situated on the north side of the lake and is at the present time, the most distant house from the centre of the Zoo. In this building in addition to the zebras, we have a tapir and white tailed gnu. We contemplate erecting over the entrance to this house a large

cage for our vultures and when these have been transferred we propose to convert their old cage together with the temporary cages situated alongside, into accommodation for our leopards. We have four of these lovely animals at the moment, due to come out of quarantine at the beginning of February.

By the time this News is in print our Fallow deer will also have been transferred to a new enclosure and their old enclosure will be under preparation for other purposes. The roadway which passed right round the deer enclosure is now the main drive to the Zebra House and has been properly constructed to carry heavy traffic. This roadway finally turns left over a bridge on the west end of the lake, so that visitors entering the Zoo through the main entrance will have a much nearer approach to the Zebra House.

The Parrot House which was opened temporarily just over twelve months ago, has now been completed and we hope before the spring to have also finished all the outdoor flights.

To the north of the Parrot House has been constructed a rose garden and we are hoping that the public will appreciate this effort to add floral beauty to the Zoo gardens. As a centrepiece to this rose garden there will be a fountain playing into a pool and we do sincerely hope that all who linger here will respect this and not use it as a receptacle for litter. Many of our visitors to whom the idea of spoiling lovely places, would be as annoying as to ourselves, could greatly assist us in keeping the Zoo tidy by calling would be transgressors to order whenever they see litter about to be dumped carelessly anywhere other than the place provided to receive it. We propose to put a number of seats in the precincts of the rose garden so that people can

rest and enjoy the peace and beauty of this spot. We have in mind many schemes for the future development of the Gardens, but these will have to be spread over a fairly long period and progress will depend largely on circumstances outside of our control.

How far we can proceed this spring with the creation of canals or waterways throughout the Zoo rests a great deal with the weather conditions. Already much valuable building time has been lost but we think we can promise that at least something attractive will have been accomplished. This is one of the projects that can only be tackled in the close season and this leaves very little time to get much done this year—if all goes well a more determined effort will be made in time for the 1952 season when it is not anticipated, we shall

have so much animal accommodation to provide as has been the case this year.

At the time of writing this article, we are pleased to report that the giraffes who are doing their quarantine in London, are progressing favourably. We did go through a very anxious period last autumn when the bull giraffe seemed to be failing rapidly, but thanks to the great care and attention he received at the London Zoo, this valuable animal appears to be making very good progress.

We are expecting many new arrivals during the next few weeks and these include European and American bison, a yak, flamingoes, penguins and a lot of new birds all of whom we hope and expect, will arrive safely at the Zoo.

G. S. MOTTERSHEAD.



EUROPEAN BISON—A new specimen of this animal should be in our collection by the time this edition is in print.

## What's in a Name.

The new addition to the Society's collection in the form of a young Polar bear, seems to me to merit something fuller than a brief announcement under the heading "NEW ARRIVALS".

In the first place this specimen is so exceptionally attractive in appearance being no doubt, for Polar bears, at the most appealing age from the public's point of view—and in the second—many of the smart kiddies in Chester have sent in their suggestions for its name and, in this connection, it is going to be a hard job to decide which most merits adoption.

The reaction of Rack and Ruin to this wholesale invasion of their quarters, has been most interesting to watch. The newcomer was kept in the dens for some days after arrival—to allow all three to become friendly through bars before attempting any more intimate introduction. As soon as it was judged to be perfectly safe, however, the little bear was allowed to emerge and taste to the full his enjoyment of the freedom to be found in the large pool and enclosure now to be his home. Rack and Ruin were obviously puzzled and a trifle suspicious—they proceeded to investigate as near to the cub as a wary eye and sharp paw would permit, and then retired to a safe distance to commune with themselves and each other. On several occasions they put their heads together and had a perfectly obvious "natter" about their future line of approach. As for the cub, he treated all this pantomime with complete indifference and as soon as the females were at a suitable distance sampled the swimming facilities and at the same time, a few delicious herrings being hurled into the depths of the pool by the keeper.

It is anticipated that by the time this is in publication a name will have been selected from the numerous suggestions submitted, and that the little male bear will have already begun to

enjoy being spoiled by his two female companions. As he continues to grow up, one feels that there is undoubtedly going to be some rivalry between the females as soon as he reaches the stage of selecting a spouse, for then of course either Rack or Ruin will be condemned to playing the unenviable role of "Gooseberry".

Whilst on the subject of Polar Bears readers may feel interested in the following details applicable to the species. According to the records and unlike other types of the bear family, the Polar bear has a small tuft of hair growing on the sole of the paw and this is generally supposed to be a provision by nature to aid the animal to obtain a better hold upon ice in its natural surroundings. It is also rarely known for hunters to catch a female Polar bear whilst pregnant or with newly born young, and this would appear to indicate that during this period the female retires into a carefully prepared hideout and hibernates, and she remains so hidden until the young are at least at the stage when they are able to fend a little for themselves. The litter is seldom larger than two and more often only one cub is born.

There seems to be no definite opinion as to whether Polar bears hibernate as a general rule—but in extreme northern regions of the Arctic there is some evidence to suggest that both sexes do so. Like a lot of other supposedly vicious wild animals, there seems to have been some exaggeration with regard to their degree of ferocity, though they certainly do have the reputation of being the fiercest type of bear in combat. However, there would seem to be not much doubt that they are as anxious to avoid contact with the hunter as one might suppose, and will only pursue a human in rare circumstances. Their method of attack then is to bite the intended victim, rather than hug as other bears do—and the Polar bear never eats his prey until it is dead, playing with the future meal as a cat will a mouse.

The Polar bear's natural diet is fish and he is very partial to seal and salmon, but in the summer months they usually resort to any wild vegetables they can find growing. Another surprising and interesting thing one learns from the records is that the Polar bear is much fleet of foot than would generally be supposed from his bulky and ungainly build—in pursuit they are capable of great bursts of speed which vary of course, according to their weight and large specimens weigh anything up to between 600 and 700 lbs. and not unfrequently attain a length of close upon 9 ft.

Well, the ferocity or speed in pursuit of our three beautiful specimens is never likely to be put to any serious test and, to judge by their thoroughly contented expressions and fine condition, such qualities are largely developed through the hazards of living in the wild state. From this conclusion it is a very small step to accept the argument of how much is to be said from their point of view, in favour of captivity providing it offers the bear its maximum amount of freedom in ideal surroundings, and I think most folks will agree that such conditions, certainly appertain to Chester Zoo.

N. J. BRUSHETT.

## The Potto.

A brief sketch of a small mammal called the Potto who has joined our collection in The Monkey House. As this animal is strictly nocturnal, not a great deal is known of its habits in a wild state. The Potto spurns the use of a bed of any kind and sleeps curled up in a ball, clinging to the branch of a tree, not my idea of sweet repose at all.

The cuddly body is covered with a thick coat of soft, rather long hair of a chestnut tint, tinged with grey or black. This colour effect is caused by the fact that the fur is grey at the roots merging to red at the tips. The almost "teddy bear" appearance of the Potto is carried still further by the small rounded ears,

which stand well up above the fur of the head, the short stumpy tail and the large eyes, set wide apart, giving a perpetual expression of wonder.

Found over a considerable extent of West Africa, the Potto is extremely susceptible to the cold of our climate, which is quite understandable and requires the greatest of care.

A. LAMB.

## Notes of Interest on the Puma, Lion, Tiger and Leopard or Panther.

PUMA (*Felis concolor*).

The coat of the Puma, or American lion as it is so often called, is of a greyish tawny colour tending to almost white on the underparts. In appearance it is rather like a small lioness, although the fur is longer and not as smooth.

This animal is found in South America and in many of the Northern States. The advance of civilization in the north has forced the Puma to retire to less populated expanses, although during the middle of the last century, it was known throughout America. Usually attacking its prey by leaping down on to the shoulders of the unsuspecting creature, the Puma draws back the head with its paws until the neck breaks. It takes a great delight in slaying and will often kill and leave the bodies untouched, for vultures and the like to feed upon.

Instead of a roar, the Puma gives a sort of hoarse cough on occasions, but generally restricts himself to spitting and snarling. The flesh of the Puma is often eaten by the Indians and is considered to be quite palatable.

In 1947 we received from Canada a female Puma. You will find her in the cage adjoining the Monkey House, if you are very lucky and she is feeling particularly pleased with life, you may hear her purr.



## THE LION.

The description of the well known members of the cat tribe such as the lion and tiger, might well appear to most of our readers to be quite superfluous, and yet all members of the main group of carnivores, or flesh eating mammals, are without doubt full of great interest. Head of the list is of course, *Felis Leo*, King of Beasts, who reigns supreme over the animal kingdom of Central and Southern Africa.

The lion, with the tiger, is the largest of all the carnivores. The beauty of well proportioned limbs, lithe agile form, the eager restless glance, all tend to make the lion look a magnificent and noble animal. The mane which clothes the neck and shoulders of the males of the species, takes away the dull uniformity of the tawny coloured coat. The fur is close and the skin loose; this looseness of the skin makes it difficult for claws to get a grip, thereby eliminating the dangers of scratches becoming serious wounds. At the end of the tail is a long tuft of hair which hides a small horny appendage, commonly known as the lions "thorn".

The lion walks on its toes, which are furnished with soft leathery pads to ensure silent footfalls. Mainly nocturnal in its habits, this bloodthirsty and ruthless tyrant, whose terrifying roar petrifies its prey, can fell an ox or antelope with a single blow of its paw.

The lion is usually a solitary animal except during the breeding season, when it is often seen with a lioness and cubs, the latter usually numbering from two to six.

Almost in a central position in the gardens, is the fine open air enclosure. Installed you will find a lion and two lionesses, all splendid specimens. The male is five years old and rejoices in the name of "Achilles". His two wives, Faith and Cordelia were both bred in the gardens and their age is from three to five

years. We are sincerely hoping that they will rear many families of cubs in the near future.

## THE TIGER.

*Felis Tigris*, the tiger, although belonging to the same group as the lion, is entirely different in appearance. It is considered by many natural history writers to be a close rival for the Royal Title, bestowed for so many years upon the lion.

The tiger ranges over a large portion of Southern Asia and is often superior in size to the lion.

The colouring of the tiger is very beautiful; flame like bands of orange interspersed with black, with white markings on the face and ears. The colouration varies slightly with age and condition of the animal, also locality and climate, but always harmonising with the jungle background.

The face is rounded more like that of the domestic cat. Instead of a mane, the male has large whisker-like tufts of hair on the cheeks, while bristles on the chin, lips and eyebrows are usual in both sexes. Those on the lips are more sensitive and noticeable in all the cat tribe and are of great assistance when making their way through the jungle at night.

Although the tigress is of smaller build than the male, she is more savage and bloodthirsty, attacking man more readily and often killing for the sheer joy of it.

The whiskers of the tiger, according to native superstition, are valuable in warding off the attentions of evil spirits and are highly prized. Even the value placed upon the whiskers does not encourage many of the natives to take part in the killing of the beast however, as they firmly believe that the spirit of the tiger will haunt after death and do them great harm.

"Sheika" the tigress, has been in our collection only twelve months, she is four years of age and in fine condition.

#### LEOPARD OR PANTHER (*Felis Pardus*).

There has always been diverse opinions concerning the elegance and beauty of leopards in comparison with the other members of the cat tribe. We are all entitled to our own opinions and as very few of us have had the opportunity of studying these animals in their natural haunts, we are forced to compare specimens in Zoological Gardens. Having studied our lions and tiger, some of you might share my opinion that our leopards are more strikingly beautiful than the former.

The colour of the skin is rather like that of the jaguar. The background is of orange-yellow, passing into white on the under parts of the body and inside legs. The spots are of irregular shape and size; along the centre of the back, inside legs and underparts of the body, the spots are brownish black and almost circular, whilst on the flanks, the spots seem to merge into one another, forming a misshapen clover leaf design in dark tawny, ringed with black.

There are perfectly black leopards found, but these are more rare than the light spotted type, and the completely white specimens are very rare indeed. The colouring and markings vary according to the locality, and as the range of the leopard is very extensive, covering a large portion of Asia as well as the whole

of Africa, many varied specimens are to be found.

The size and build of the leopard is much smaller than that of the lion and tiger, and the head of the male is unadorned by any mane or tufts of hair on the face, merely having the strong white whiskers common to both sexes.

Essentially an arboreal animal, the leopard attacks very stealthily without even a warning growl, always springing for the throat of its victim.

In motion, the leopard is the embodiment of perfect grace, add to this the beauty of its coat and we have an elegant and beautiful creature.

In our collection we have four leopards, two of which are young females only fifteen months old. These are very docile and appear very friendly, especially to their keeper, pressing their back against the bars of their cage for him to fondle and scratch. The other two are fully mature male and female and anything but docile. At the sound of a nearby footstep, they spit and snarl, fangs showing, tails waving, altogether ferocious in the extreme. Unfortunately these lovely animals of ours are still in quarantine, being newly imported to this country. We are hoping that in the early spring, they will be installed in the new homes that are being designed for them.

K. HICKMAN.



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Another view of our Lions in their large enclosure.



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