



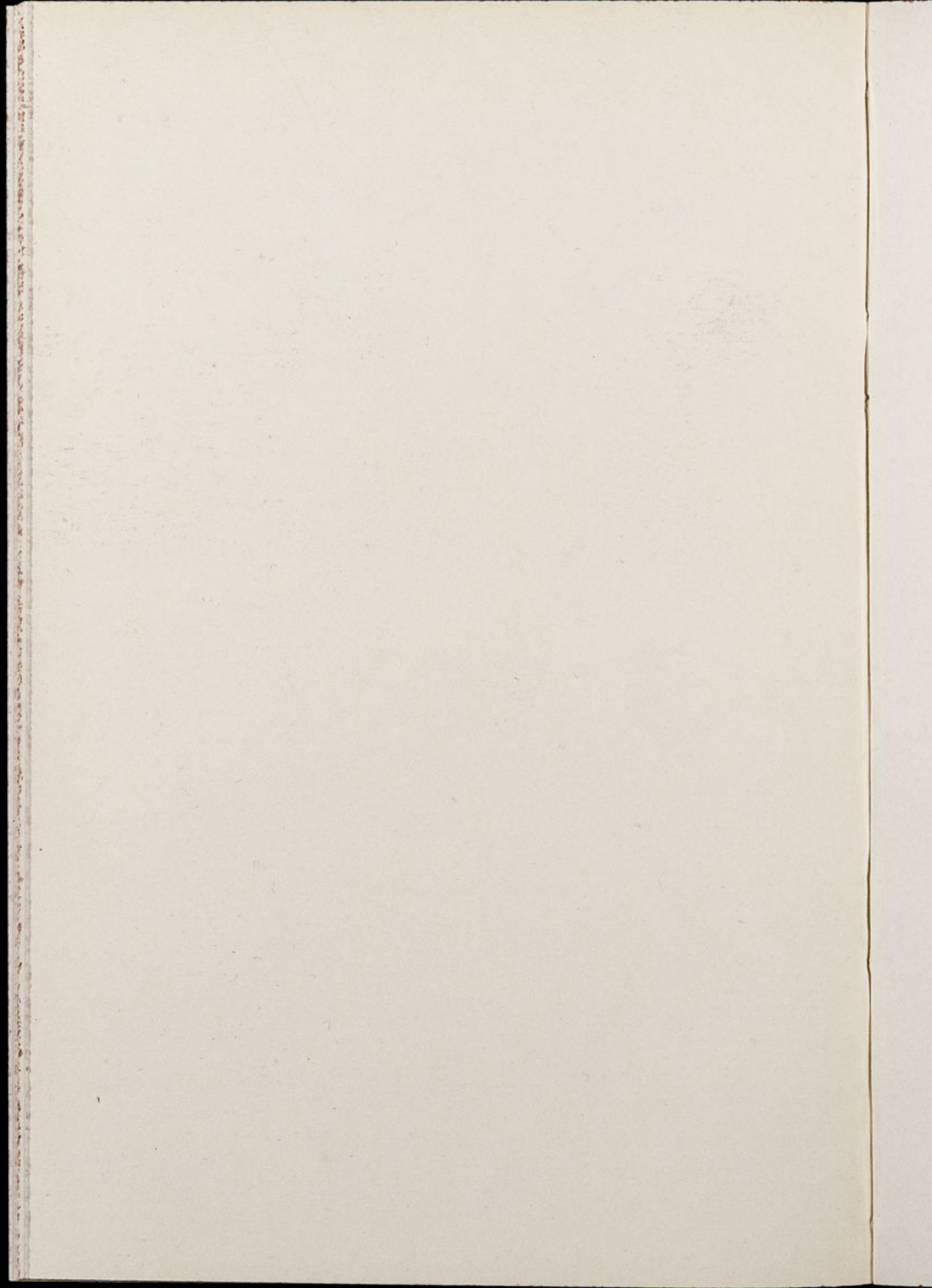
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Chester Zoo News

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

August, 1963

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Editorial

Each year we receive a large number of party bookings from Schools, Social Clubs, Youth Organisations and many others. Although, at the time of writing, we are barely half way through the summer season, the number of parties which have visited the Zoo is already ahead of that for the whole of last year. Our party booking staff have been working flat out for the past three months to cope with the flood of letters and telephone calls.

Again there have been many additions to the Collection in the way of births, presentations and exchanges, which you can read about on the following pages.

Resurfacing of the Zoo roadways is nearing completion, the finishing touches are being added to the new Monkey House and the new enclosures near the Rhinoceros House are ready to receive their occupants. Altogether, July has been another very busy month at Chester Zoo.

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COVER: The Elephant paddock is the subject of this month's cover picture.

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ZOO BABIES

CHIMPANZEE: "Babu" one of our two breeding Chimpanzee females had another baby at the end of June. As we have come to expect, Babu abandoned her baby immediately after birth and it is being hand-reared. We have named the baby "Sarah" and, as you can see from the photograph, she is a fine healthy youngster.



"SARAH"

Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

AMERICAN BISON: We have already reported the birth of three American Bison calves and now there is a fourth. This means that all our adult female Bison have calved this year. Babies number three and four are a male and female respectively.

WILDEBEEST: The Wildebeest paddock has had another addition — a second male calf.

RED LECHWE: The first Red Lechwe calf of 1963 was born on the 5th July.

GERRY: We always knew that Gerry had a mind of his own and his sleeping habits are further evidence of the little Giraffe's determination. Gerry will not share the straw laid down for his mother each night, but chooses his own sleeping spot in the opposite corner of the enclosure to his mother. Therefore, a separate bed has to be made for him. On one occasion when this was not done he slept on the concrete rather than share his mother's straw.



R. Ainsley

THE BLACK SWAN FAMILY

BIRDS: Four Pennant Parrakeets are out of the nest in one aviary and several more are due to appear in another. Two Lady Amherst Pheasants have hatched. The Humboldt's Penguins have not yet brought their "twins" out of the breeding cave and the male is still hard at work blocking up the entrance with nesting material. The Mute Swans, which nested on the Chimpanzee Islands, have hatched three cygnets. All the Black Swan Cygnets are doing well and you can see one of the first photographs of the family on this page.

NESTING ACTIVITIES

We mentioned last month that there was a great deal of courting activity among the King Penguins and now one pair are incubating an egg.



FLAMINGOS

Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

A number of Zoos have been successful in breeding Flamingos, including Basle Zoo, Switzerland and San Antonio Zoo, Texas. Although our Flamingos have built mud nests on numerous occasions, eggs have never been laid. The photograph above shows one of the Flamingos sitting on the latest nest, with three other members of the flock in the foreground.

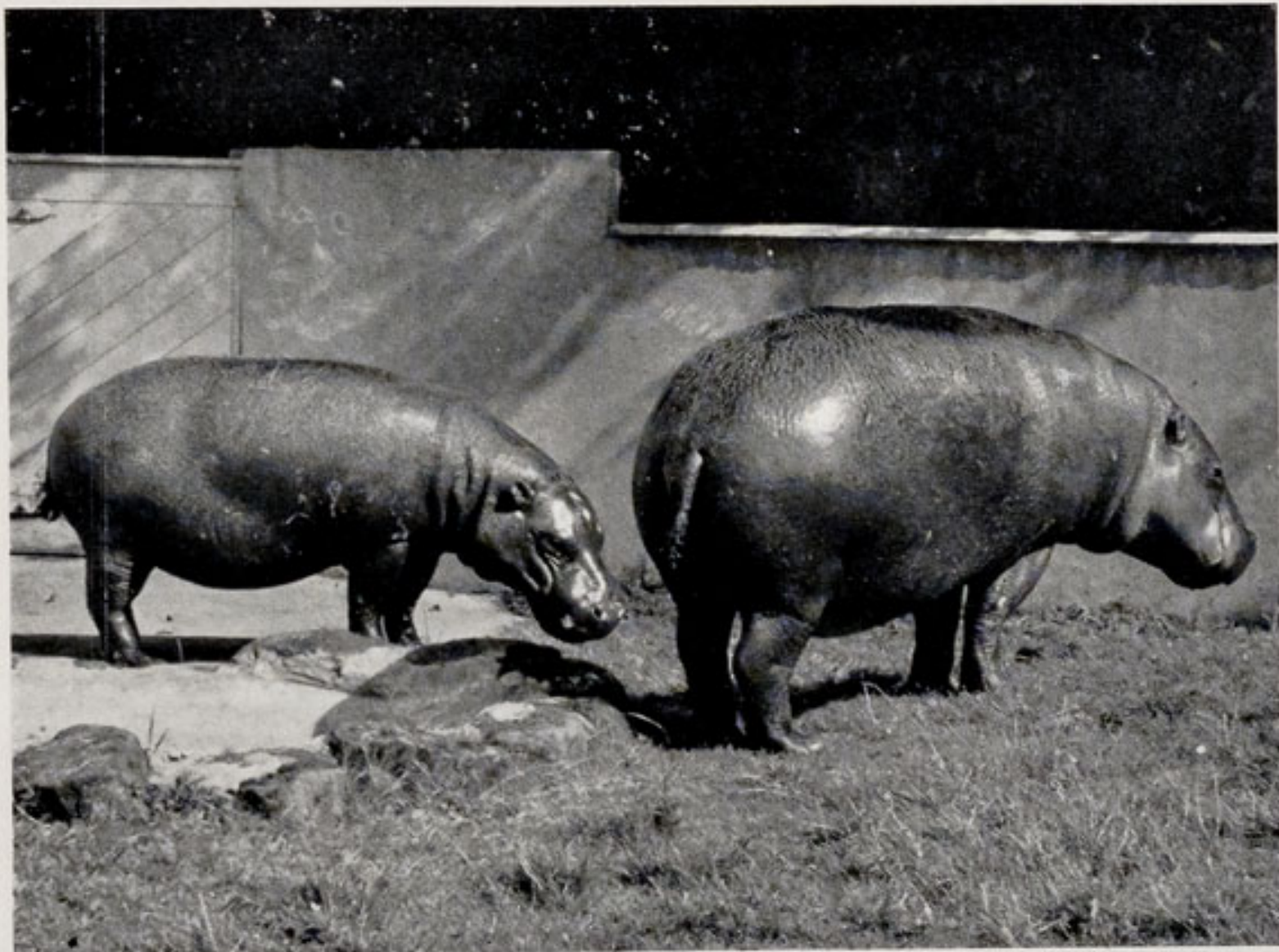
ZEBRA TO AUCKLAND

"Stella", one of our Common or Grant's Zebras, set out for a new home in New Zealand on the 3rd of July. She was born at Chester in August 1960. At Auckland Zoo Stella will join the Common Zebra stallion, also sent from Chester in October 1959. Until Stella arrives he has the distinction of being the only Zebra in New Zealand.

RED KANGAROO

Another new arrival was a male Giant Red Kangaroo from Bristol Zoo, which arrived on the 3rd July. It now shares the enclosure alongside the Waterbus booking office with our female Red Kangaroo.

PIGMY HIPPOS



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

The friendship between "Max" and "Phyllis" is ripening. They eat, sleep and bathe together with only very occasional disagreements. In the photograph above, the Pigmy Hippos are taking a stroll round their outdoor paddock — Phyllis leading the way!



YOUNG LLAMAS

D. Lawless

EXCHANGE

We try, as far as possible, to provide our animals with mates and to do this we quite often exchange animals with other Zoos. One recent exchange was with Paris Zoo. At the end of June one of the Llamas bred at Chester in 1962 was despatched per the s.s. Berkelstroom from Manchester and in return we will receive a male Bushbuck, as a mate for our female.

BUSH PIG

Also at the end of June, we received a female Bush Pig from Paignton Zoo, which will be introduced to Willie, our original Bush Pig, when he has grown a little. At the moment he is very much smaller than his new wife.

PRESENTATIONS

We are grateful for the many presentations made to the Collection in recent weeks. From the Director of Morsalis Zoo in Dallas we received two female North American Racoons and from Paris Zoo a pair of Fennec Foxes. Three other presentations to the animal section were a Diana Monkey, an African Ground Squirrel and two Marmosets. The Reptile House was given a young Cayman and the bird section was presented with a collection of small birds, including Silverbills, Fischer's Lovebirds, Green Singing Finches, White-headed Nuns, Golden-breasted Waxbills and a Pekin Robin.

BIRDS OF PREY

The Birds of Prey, or Falconiformes, are divided into five families, of which two have representatives in the Bird Collection at Chester.

The first family is the *Cathartidae* — the American Vultures — and this is represented here by a pair of Black Vultures. These birds, like nearly all our Birds of Prey, are housed in the very large flight, more than one hundred feet long, behind the Nocturnal House. They are small vultures, black all over, with the typical bare head and neck of the family. Like all vultures they are carrion feeders and are fed in captivity on horsemeat, dead rabbits, rats and fowls. Our pair nest every year but, sad to relate, their eggs always disappear. Probably the three Ravens which share the flight have some idea of what happens to them.

The second family, *Sagattariidae*, has only one member, the Secretary Bird, of which a specimen lived at Chester until recently. It is quite unlike any other member of the five families, being long-legged and rarely airborne. The Secretary Bird is highly esteemed



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

RACCOON

as a snake-killer, but lives also on small mammals, ground birds and their eggs and young. In captivity its appetite is enormous and this is a factor which must be watched carefully, if it is to be kept in good health.

All our other Birds of Prey belong to the third family, the *Accipitridae*, or Old World Vultures, Hawks, Eagles, Kites and Harriers. Of those at Chester the most famous is the Griffon Vulture, the oldest inhabitant of the bird section, which was bred here as long ago as 1940. In spite of being twenty-three years old, he is in wonderful condition and as hard as nails. Other vultures of the same family are a White-backed Vulture — a particular friend of the Griffon Vulture — and a young pair of White-headed Vultures, which are quite recent arrivals.

Our two British Buzzards also belong to the *Accipitridae*, as do the Long crested Hawk Eagle the African Fish Eagle and three Bateleur Eagles. All the birds mentioned so far share the large flight referred to above. Surprisingly little quarrelling takes place, but it is always necessary to remove any bird which is off-colour, in order to avoid a regrettable accident.

The Golden Eagle, referred to in a previous article, has a large aviary to himself, at the side of the large flight. This bird is so temperamental that it is quite a hazard for his Keeper to enter the aviary and cleaning out is generally a two-man job.

Family number four, the *Pandionidae*, also consists of only one member, the Osprey or Fish Hawk. We have none at Chester, but a few words about them may be of interest. Formerly, they were common in the British Isles, but the efforts of Gamekeepers and Water Bailiffs banished the Osprey about fifty years ago. Many people will have read in the newspapers how one pair succeeded in hatching and rearing young in 1958 (and on several occasions since). It was necessary to post a twenty-four hour guard on the nest to protect the birds from egg-hunters.



Mr & Mrs. E. Sorby

BATELEUR EAGLE

Although we generally have a Kestrel in the collection, at the time of writing there is no member of the fifth and last family, the *Falconidae*, at Chester. These are the birds which are used in the ancient sport of Falconry, or capturing game with the aid of a trained Falcon. Typical of the family is the splendid Peregrine, whose power dive at a pigeon is one of the most thrilling sights in nature. It is said to achieve a speed not far from two hundred miles an hour on these occasions and its victims can literally never know what hit them. Such birds are probably unsuited to life in captivity.

AQUARIUM NEWS

During the past month, all the young fish mentioned in the July magazine have grown at a tremendous rate and will soon be large enough to move into bigger tanks. The young fish we are happiest about are, undoubtedly, the Dwarf Rainbow Cichlids, or *Kribensis*. In one month their size has increased almost five-fold. At the moment they are showing an interesting pattern of dark brown bars and spots, but should become as colourful as their parents as they mature. The young *Kribensis* are eating quantities of white worms, daphnia and gnat larvae and between feeding times, pick almost incessantly at the fine green algae growing on the back of their tank. *Kribensis* are one of the few members of the Cichlid family which require a variety of soft green food in the earlier stages of growth. Indeed, even adult *Kribensis* have been known to eat and enjoy certain varieties of plants in the Aquarium.

This month we have added three very interesting varieties of fish to our collection:—Clown Loaches (*Botia macracantha*), Spiny Eels (*Mastacembelus maculatus* and *M. pancalus*) and *Copeina arnoldi*.

The Clown Loaches are the most colourful of the newcomers, being banded in orange and blue-black. On the other hand, the Spiny Eels are the most unusual shape. They are ribbon-like in appearance and move secretively around their tanks, looking rather like diminutive snakes. As already mentioned, we have two different species of this interesting fish, which we hope will grow to over eight inches long. In their natural surrounding they are known to attain a length of seventeen inches.

Copeina arnoldi have perhaps the most unusual breeding habits of any fish. These attractive fish spawn by leaping out of the water and clinging to any suitable leaf overhead, on which eggs are laid and fertilized. This amazing spawning method continues until all the eggs are laid. The male then looks after the eggs, flicking water onto them with his tail. When the eggs hatch, the fry wriggle their way into the water.

We have prepared a three hundred gallon tank to hold our shoal of Piranhas, which have already outgrown their second tank. We are hoping that their present size of approximately four and a half inches will more than double in the following months. Our specimens are proving to have appetites as voracious as their larger, wild cousins and are now eating freshly killed rats, mice and chickens. We were amazed to find that every part of their food is consumed, with the exception of the skull, which is still proving a little too much for their razor-sharp teeth and powerful jaws. It is easy to imagine what nasty customers they can become when given a chance to grow even larger.

AXOLOTLS

Our breeding stock of Axolotls have produced phenomenal numbers of eggs, most of which hatched successfully. We have, at present, approximately two hundred larval Axolotls in various stages of growth, ranging from hatchlings barely a quarter of an inch long to healthy three-inch specimens of both black and white varieties. These, of course, are much smaller than their parents, most of which are over nine inches long.

Axolotls have been a constant source of interest to Scientists and Laymen alike, since they were first discovered. It was found that young Axolotls could be made to complete their natural metamorphosis and become Salamanders, simply by adding thyroid extract or pituitary gland to their diet, thereby bringing the Axolotls latent powers of growth into operation. Some people claim that the same effect can be produced by the addition of a measured quantity of iodine to their water. Other methods can be employed with varying degrees of success, the most usual and perhaps the easiest method for the layman being to allow the water in



M. D. Murphy

YOUNG BLACK AXOLOTL

the Axolotls tank to evaporate slowly. This stimulates the growth of lungs and use of atmospheric air, instead of normal breathing through their feathery gills, using diffused oxygen from the water.

Another peculiarity not often met with in the animal world, is the Axolotls ability to regenerate lost or damaged limbs. If a limb or part of one is bitten off or damaged by a predator, the Axolotl simply sets to and grows another, equally as perfect as the original. This interesting phenomenon can lead to rather macabre complications. Frequently the limb is not bitten off clean, but is simply badly broken. In such a case the replacement limb may grow in the break of the original limb, resulting in a five legged Axolotl.

The adult Axolotls in the Aquarium are fed on large strips of meat or herring, whereas the youngsters, during the initial stages of growth, have to be fed on fine daphnia, or cyclops — two common freshwater crustaceans. As they grow larger they progress to large daphnia and chopped earth worms and finally start eating fragments of meat. The illustration on this page shows a young Black Axolotl with its full complement of gills. These are frequently reduced in size with older specimens and occasionally all that remains is a cluster of jelly-like buds on either side of the head.

CHESTER ZOO'S ROSE GARDENS

The H. T. Rose Garden was made and planted twelve years ago. Over the last few years three of the beds have been remade and replanted with newer varieties. One was planted with the

variety Sultane, which is a fragrant, vermilion, orange, and gold bi-colour.

Bi-colours have become increasingly popular during the last few years and the second of the three remade beds has been planted with another — Gail Borden. This variety is deep peach to salmon rose in colour, with pale gold reverse. It is a strong grower with large fragrant flowers. The bed was planted during the winter of 1961-62.



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

A CORNER OF THE ROSE GARDEN BY THE FOUNTAIN RESTAURANT

Last winter the third bed was planted with the new Super Star variety, which caused such a sensation and received so much publicity when first introduced. It is the perfect rose. The colouring which is pure vermilion, does not fade with age and the flowers are of perfect form. Again, Super Star has good lasting qualities and is fragrant.

Whilst we shall always retain our H. T. Rose Garden, it is the Floribunda Roses that are most suited to us in the Zoo, because of their continuity and mass of flower. During recent years thousands of Floribunda Roses have been planted here. Forty-five varieties of these are in separate beds, thirty-nine of them in the most recently made garden in the Fountain Restaurant area. The most notable bed is that of three hundred bushes of Queen Elizabeth, planted on the bank by the side of the canal bridge.

We also have borders of mixed varieties of roses and it is here, perhaps, that we get the most brilliant blaze of colour. We are indeed fortunate in having soil that is so suitable for roses, it being a heavy loam on clay.

Our visitors this year will have noticed that the standard roses, which are planted in the beds, are not as uniform as they should be. This is because of losses caused by the very severe frosts of last winter. In all we lost fifty standard roses — a big loss and one that we cannot make good until replacements can be planted next winter.

THE FUCHSIA BORDER

During recent years we have made a feature of the Fuchsia Border which is situated at the bottom end of the H. T. Rose Garden. This lovely old plant has very much returned to favour and with the introduction of new and better varieties Fuchsias have become even more interesting.

We have seventy-four varieties planted in this border. Many more varieties are available, however, we are not trying to build up a collection merely for collections sake, but to have good varieties, which are really worth their place in the border. We shall of course add to our number of varieties, as worthwhile newcomers come to hand.

Apart from the border, visitors will find Fuchsias in most parts of the Zoo, either as standards or in hanging baskets. And, of course, there is the climbing Fuchsia border in the Rhinoceros House.

A BRIEF LOOK AT ZOO-KEEPING AS A CAREER

Each year literally hundreds of girls and boys write in asking for posts as Zoo Keepers, so we thought readers might be interested to know what Chester Zoo's Girl Keepers consider to be the attributes of a good Keeper. They were unanimous in listing — deep love of animals, real ability to work hard and put in long hours whenever necessary, sense of responsibility, sense of humour, patience and levelheadedness. None of Chester's Girl Keepers would wish to change their life, despite a comparatively low starting salary. Zoo Keeping is far from being an easy way of earning a living, but it is an extremely satisfying one.

At Chester a normal working day begins at eight in the morning and may end at five thirty in the summer and rather earlier in the winter months. Of course Zoo Keepers must be prepared to work longer hours whenever necessary. Anyone expecting to work regular hours should certainly never consider working with animals.

Food preparation is the first duty of the day and feeding is usually under way by eight thirty each morning. Cleaning out of cages and enclosures is the next chore and would certainly remove any illusions that Zoo Keeping is a glamour occupation. For Girl Keepers the uniform is overall, jeans and Wellington boots! As far as possible, cleaning of all outside enclosures is finished by ten a.m., leaving the rest of the day free for feeding and cleaning of sleeping quarters.

Zoo Keeping means hard work, but it has many compensations — the affection of the animals, the satisfaction of working with healthy contented animals, rearing successfully what may in many cases be the young of rare animals, countless amusing incidents which occur and it offers a healthy, outdoor life.

Many animals, particularly young ones, can be handled and cared for more successfully by Girl Keepers and Chester Zoo has six Girl Keepers on its animal staff. The animals they care for include Monkeys, Chimps, Jackals, Malayan Bears, Marmoset, Wapiti, Sika Deer, Chinese Water Deer, Lesser Pandas and numerous Nocturnal animals.

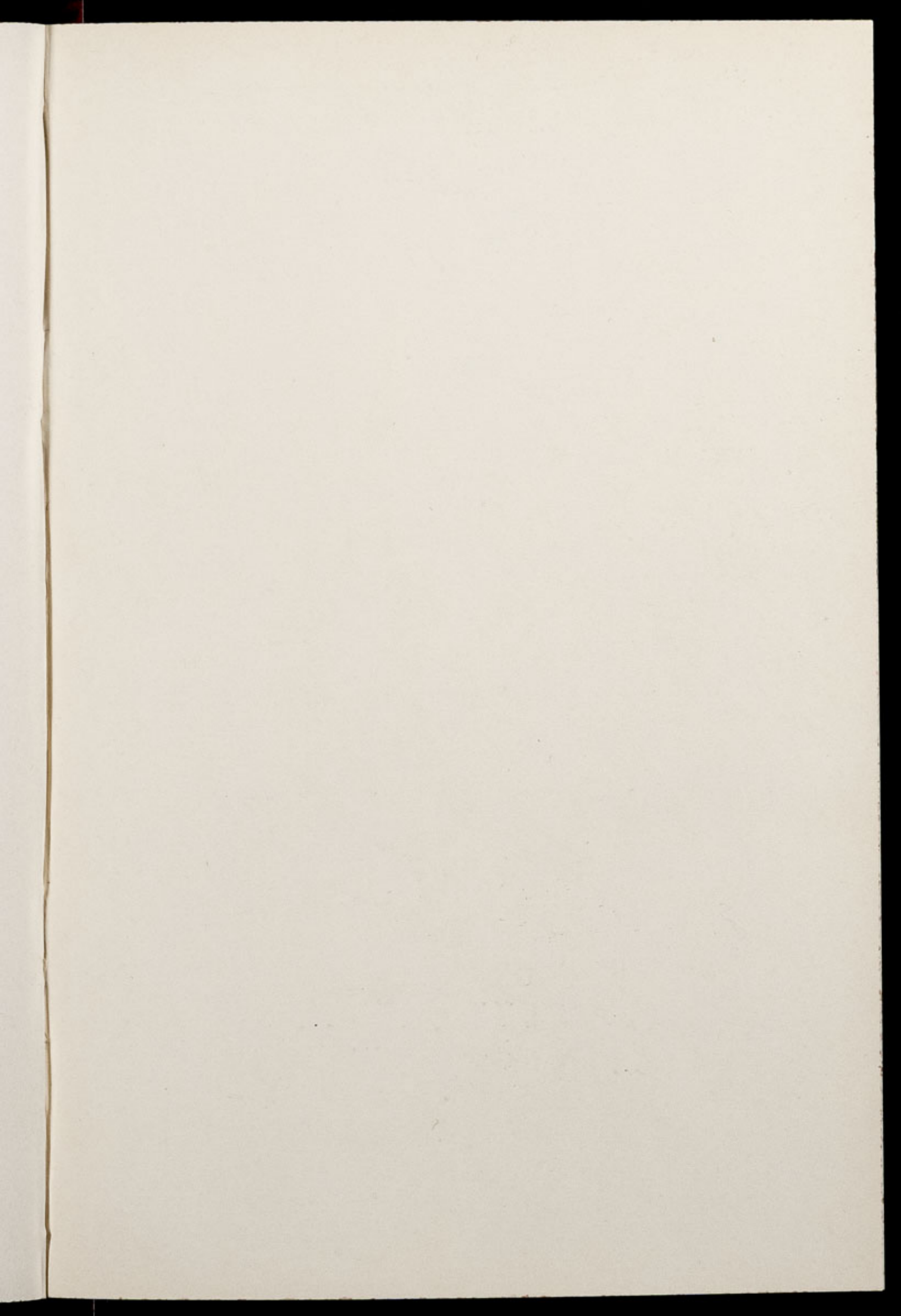
Baby Chimps in particular need to be talked to and kept amused. Actually Chester's Girl Keepers talk to all the animals in their charge, when feeding and cleaning. Very few animals fail to show some sign of affection to a well-known and trusted Keeper.

However, even tame animals are never completely trustworthy — their wild instinct is never completely eliminated. Keepers must always carry some form of protection — usually in the shape of a brush — when entering animal cages or enclosures. If necessary the brush can be used to push the animal away. Another golden rule is — keep calm and never allow an animal to realise that you are afraid. If you find yourself in a tight corner, never run but back slowly out of the enclosure, talking soothingly the while. Animal mothers with babies require the most care and, of course, if you run from a disturbed animal it will charge and then you are really in trouble.

Girl Keepers normally join the Staff at seventeen years of age and over and for their first year are classed as Trainee Keepers. Thereafter they can become fully-fledged Keepers and promotion through the various grades depends on their ability.

The Girls' biggest objection to Zoo life is the seeming inability of many members of the public to read notices. Despite large "NO FEEDING," "PLEASE DO NOT TEASE THE ANIMALS," or "THESE ANIMALS BITE" signs, visitors will persist in ignoring them. Keepers put the welfare of their animals before all else and strongly resent thoughtless feeding or teasing of animals by members of the public. Untold damage is done to the health of the animals, indeed many cases of public feeding result in the death of the animal in question.

All Chester Zoo's Girl Keepers agree that, despite the obvious drawbacks, the Zoo offers a rewarding life to any girl with a genuine love of animals and a desire to express it in a practical way.



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