

"Our Zoo News & Guide"

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS AND GUIDE TO
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

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January, 1940.

The Month goes by.

The year 1939 has now passed and with it many hopes and disappointments, but on the whole the Zoo is now in a much stronger position at the beginning of 1940 than it was in January of 1939.

Our stock is much larger than ever it was and although we are in the midst of a war we feel we shall be able to fill a very useful service to the community during the coming season.

The sudden cold spell of weather which came at the end of December has not had much effect on the animals as a whole, quite a number of birds which have usually been taken indoors in November are still outside and look very well.

The lioness "Faith" and her three cubs seem to be quite contented in the cold and prove how animals can adapt themselves to conditions.

Now we have a story to tell about these last three cubs, we have mentioned before how they had their complete liberty and enjoyed it to the full.

It was realised that sooner or later this liberty would have to be curtailed but we decided to let them have it as long as they behaved themselves.

The first warning came a few days before Christmas. The keeper was taking them their meat when they came to meet him. Not waiting to have it given to them, they took it from him and carried it to their den.

A day or so later we noticed that they were having some difficulty in getting through the hole by which they gained their liberty.

However the climax came the other day. We had just gone round to see that all was well, the lioness was on guard in her pen, which showed us her cubs were out somewhere. As soon as she saw us she gave her warning sound. A few seconds later a little cub came sneaking back looking very guilty and covered with blood; where had it been? Shortly afterwards another arrived in the same condition but so fat that it could not get back through the hole through which it had made its exit.

It was obvious that there had been a kill but what could it be, a rabbit perhaps, but no there was far too much blood on them for that. We then went in the direction from which they had come to see if we could see the other.

We had not far to go for there in the field adjoining, lay all that there was left of a sheep and the largest cub (a male) filled to capacity, having a final lick.

They were furious at not being able to rejoin their mother and it was some time before we could persuade her to go into her den whilst we opened the door of the outer pen to enable the cubs to enter the cage.

We could not help feeling sorry for them as we saw them go in after having had their liberty for the last time. If only the public could have seen them as they played about in the field and shrubbery our "Open Air Lion Enclosure Fund" would have grown considerably.

"Hope's" two cubs whose birth was announced in the last issue are growing fine and are on full view to the public.

They were christened on the 16th of December by the actress Miss Lea Seidl. The male was named "Regal" after the Picture House where Miss Seidl was appearing at a Charity Concert and the female Miss Seidl christened "Lea" after herself.

The public will have no difficulty in recognising "Regal" for he has every appearance of living up to his name and has a very distinct black mark down his back and is far more spotted than "Lea" his sister.

We are pleased to report that the Leopardess's foot which was reported damaged in the last issue, is now almost completely better. How nature has healed this ghastly wound has been really marvellous to watch and many a doctor would look on with envy at the progress of nature's healing powers.

We are pleased to say that the Binturong which recently arrived at the Zoo from Mr. Whitley, of Paignton, is doing very nicely and is now far more active than when it first came. Being a nocturnal animal it sleeps most of the day, but in the evening is very active and causes much amusement in the way it approaches you if you go into the cage. Advancing by a series of short jumps it approaches very much like a terrier expecting you to play with him, but there is no bark and instead he makes a sort of hissing sound.

Its coat is really beautiful with a gloss which reflects when you flash a light on in the dark. The other day we succeeded in getting a rough measurement of this fine animal. From nose to tip of tail it is over five feet of which the large bushy tail will be about half this length.

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The Tahr have settled down very nicely and there is every prospect of there being little ones in the spring. The courting habits of this strange goat are very amusing to watch. What would be considered disgusting if a man put his tongue out at a maiden

when he approached her, apparently this animal considers it a high form of salutation to the fair sex, and what a tongue it is too, reminding one of some of the reptiles that thrust out this instrument to catch flies, but in this case it is to attract the lady of his choice only in a different manner.

The male has a very fine long silky coat, quite different to the female whose coat is short, in fact she is, one might say, not much to look at, so perhaps there might be something in common between the male Tahr and the boy who pulls faces at an ugly girl.

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EDUCATION OF ZOO STAFF.

So that visitors to the Zoo will always be able to receive intelligent and reliable information about the various exhibits at the Zoo a staff of keepers are being specially trained.

For this purpose a special room is being set aside which will be used by them for the study of all Zoological matters.

A fairly large number of books are available for them to study and we are hoping to raise a fund to equip this room with a good microscope and other instruments which will help in the study and research of Zoological life.

Apart from the benefit the public will receive, such knowledge gained will be of inestimable value to the animals themselves, furthermore when schools visit the Zoo, teachers will find an intelligent keeper far more useful, than one whose knowledge consists of just what has been gained by the cleaning and feeding of some particular animal.

The keepers will make notes which will be compiled and kept as a record for further reference.

Any help which can be given towards this scheme will be greatly appreciated.

Keepers will also be encouraged to contribute notes to this News.

The Society would be grateful for horses, goats, etc., which would provide meat for the carnivorous animals.

All such animals will be kindly treated and humanely destroyed when required or necessary.

A NOVEL ADOPTION SCHEME.

To help in the adoption of all the extra animals and birds a novel method has been mentioned to us.

This is as follows:

Wherever a group of people work together it has been suggested that they collect from each person a penny or any amount they may agree upon to raise a weekly sum to enable them to adopt some animal at the Zoo.

For every shilling collected a ticket to admit two persons to the Zoo would be given and these should be drawn for by the staff contributing to the adoption of the Zoo animals. There must be a great number of offices and works where such a method could be adopted and apart from the great help that would be given to the animals a certain amount of interest would also be created by the draw each week as to who would win the ticket or tickets to the Zoo.

Chester Zoo was the first to inaugurate the adoption scheme which has now been copied by the London Zoo. Can we be the first to have every animal and bird adopted? Remember it is this assistance which will help to keep the Zoo going for the benefit of the public, and particularly the children during these hard times.

DONATIONS from the following are acknowledged with thanks:—

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HINTS ON HOW TO MAKE YOUR VISIT TO THE ZOO MORE INTERESTING.

"LANGUAGE OF ANIMALS."

All animals have a language, that is, a means of expressing their feelings to one another. This may take many forms, perhaps by sounds uttered and very often by actions.

Nevertheless this language is quite sufficient for their needs and had they developed like the human race there is no doubt that they would have developed their vocal organs just as we have.

Look at some of the natives from those outlandish places where civilised white men have hardly penetrated and we find that their expression or language is very near to that found in many animals.

Many people who own a dog and really make a pet of it, can understand exactly what it wants by its actions and noises. One does, in fact, often hear the remark passed that the dog "simply talks," which is quite correct, it does talk but in doggie language and because you think a lot of your pet, and try to understand exactly what it wants, you unconsciously begin to understand its language.

Do you know it often strikes me as extremely silly when you see someone trying to make a dog do something by issuing a command and then getting really furious when the dog does not understand.

It amounts to this, you are expecting the dog to understand you when you do not understand the dog.

The same thing applies to all animals. We quite often see people at the Zoo getting furious because an animal will not do just what they want it to.

Another person will come along and the animal will literally do anything for him.

The reason is very simple, because this latter person has studied the animal's actions and noises and by understanding just what the animal desires, can interpret his own wants into a form easily understood by the animal.

It is not very difficult to learn the language of animals, if we bear in mind one or two points. The first of which is to remember that you are fortunately endowed by nature, with a far superior intelligence than the animals, therefore, you should help the animal to teach you its language and not expect it to force its meaning on to you. In other words study the animal, its noises and actions and by doing so you will soon begin to understand what the animal is saying.

I remember once seeing a lady get quite annoyed with a Chimpanzee because it would not do just what she wanted it to do, she then began to call it all sorts of stupid names.

A gentleman came up at the time and after surveying the lady for several minutes said "Excuse me madam but how many languages do you speak." The lady looked at him with amazement and then answered with some hesitation "Just one, English." "The same as the Chimpanzee," the man replied, "One language, only he speaks Chimpanzee."

If that lady had endeavoured to learn what she Chimpanzee wanted by its actions and sounds, she would very soon have been able to express her wants to the animal who would then have been able to understand her.

Animals, therefore, should be studied if we are to understand them. It is far more enjoyable to be able to visit the Zoo and talk to the animals in a language they understand, because then they will talk back and many funny tales they can tell if only you are wise enough to understand what they say.

The Animals Friend.

