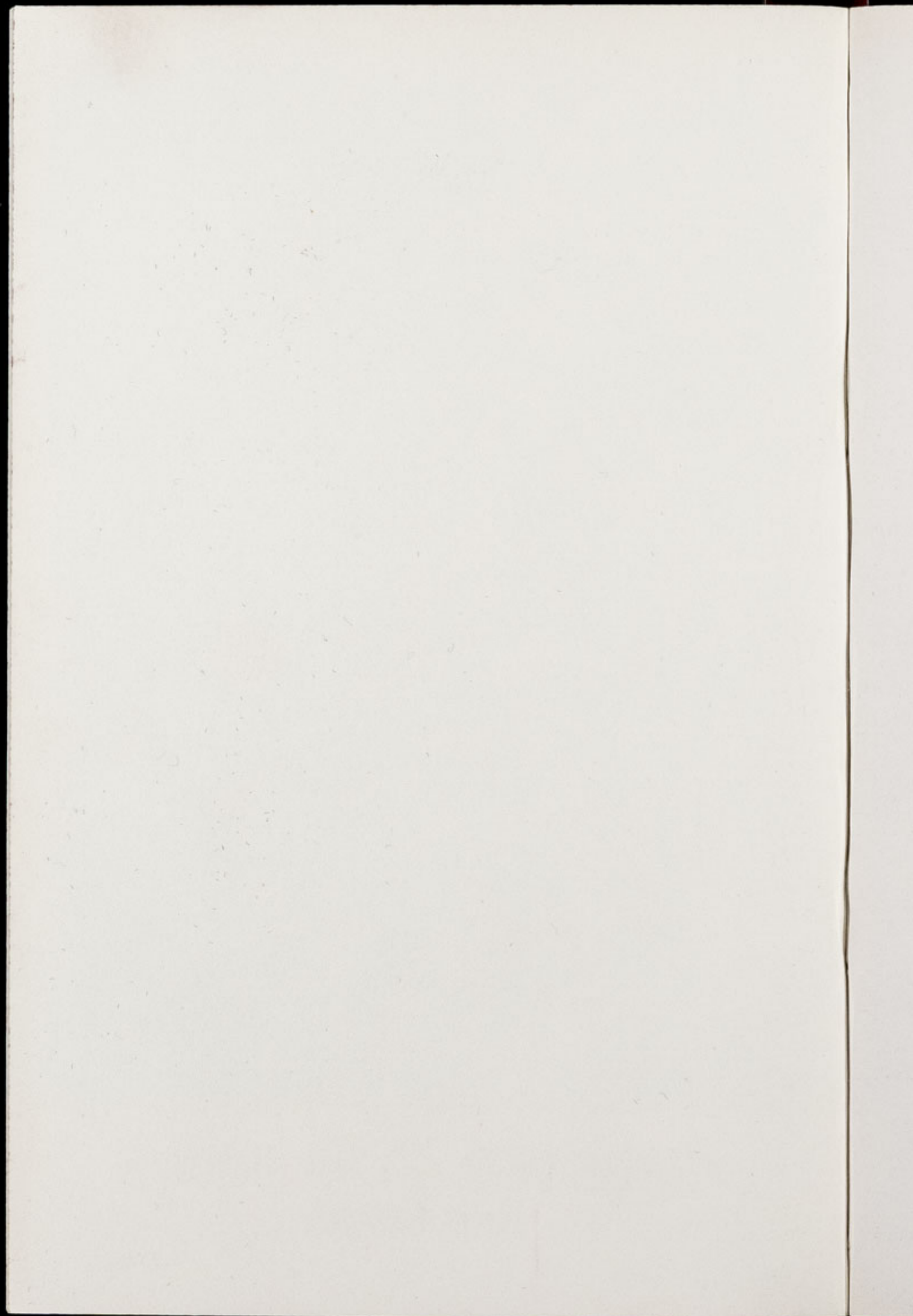




CHESTER ZOO NEWS
AND GUIDE

November 1971

Price 6p



The North of England Zoological Society

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COVER: *White Pelican.*

By Courtesy of K. W. Green, A.R.P.S.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION — NINETY FIVE NEW PENCE POSTAGE PAID

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ARRIVALS AND BIRTHS

In the Nocturnal House both the Edible Dormice (*Glis glis*) and the Spiny Mice (*Acomys cahirinus*) have bred again, the latter for the second time since their arrival in April. Their first litter, produced in August, contained two young but this time only one has been observed.

As three Edible Dormice have left the nest, we now have eleven of these attractive little animals which have long grey fur and bushy tails. Edible Dormice, so named because once they were fattened specially for the table, are found in the wild state in southern Europe and western Asia. They have been introduced into this country and are present in considerable numbers in Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire. During the winter, wild Edible Dormice hibernate and in summer produce a single litter of from two to six after a gestation period of about 24 days. For about a month the young, born with their eyes closed and without fur, remain in the nest, which at the Zoo is in a hollow tree.

Two more Leopard cubs (*Panthera pardus*) have been born, making a total of three litters this year. The two cubs born in August are now coming into the outer enclosure with their mother.

Last year we acquired a male Collared Peccary (*Tayassu tajacu*), as the three animals of this species already in the collection were all females, but unfortunately it died. We have now obtained another male which has been introduced to the three sows in their enclosure, No. 24.

The Collared Peccary is a native of America where its range is from the southern United States to Patagonia. Though related to the pigs, Peccaries differ in having canine teeth which point downwards as opposed to upwards to form tusks. Their dark brown fur is speckled with grey and, as can be seen from the photograph on the right, a narrow line of paler fur is present around the neck. The Peccary also has a musk gland on its back which it is believed



COLLARED PECCARY (*Tayassu tajacu*)

K. W. Green, A.R.P.S.

may be associated with marking territories. These animals travel in small bands and subsist on a diet of berries, fruits, plants, grubs, etc. Gestation lasts for about four and a half to five months and usually a litter contains two young which have reddish fur with a dark stripe along the back.

Visitors to the Red-bellied Wallaby enclosures, No. 87 on the Zoo plan, may be lucky enough to see the baby Wallaby (*Thylogale billardierii*) observed recently in its mother's pouch. These marsupials, which in the wild state are found in Tasmania, have bred regularly since they arrived at the Zoo in 1965.

New arrivals in the Small Mammal House are a number of Siamese Black Squirrels (*Callosciurus bacourtii*), a species originating from South East Asia. Having a total body length of about twelve inches, these beautiful little animals are somewhat smaller than the Grey Squirrels seen in this country and have lustrous black fur.

Finally we have acquired an adult female Californian Sea Lion (*Zalophus californianus*) which has joined the four juvenile specimens residing in the Sea Lion Pool, No. 48.

AQUARIUM NEWS

The Local Marine Section of the Aquarium provides visitors with an opportunity to see the life that flourishes around our own shores, most of the exhibits having been caught off the coast of North Wales, especially around Anglesey. Since the last Aquarium News, many more Plumose Anenomes in colour phases of yellowish-orange and white have been added to the Anemone exhibit in this section and in the adjacent tank there is now a female Lobster (*Homarus vulgaris*), estimated to be about eight years old. This is a

particularly interesting specimen as she is carrying several thousand eggs on the underside of her abdomen. The eggs require up to eight months to hatch and Lobsters do not breed until they are about eight years of age. Their average life span is approximately 20 years. The Lobster is being fed on pieces of meat and also Mussels which are placed in the tank. She is equipped with powerful pincers on one of her front claws, which are used to crush the shells of the Mussels to reach the fleshy parts inside. The other claw has a serrated edge employed in tearing the flesh into pieces.

Other arrivals in this section include a number of Hermit Crabs. These are soft-bodied crabs which protect themselves by appropriating the vacated shells of other creatures. As the crabs grow, they have to find larger and larger shells in which to live and so we have placed empty shells of varying sizes in the tank. On locating a suitable new home, the Hermit Crab moves in as quickly as possible, for without the protection of a shell it is extremely vulnerable to the many predators in the sea. Exhibited in the same tank as the Hermit Crabs are Blennies, Gobies, Beadlit Anemones and a Squat Lobster.

Our newly-acquired specimen of Triggerfish (*Balistapus aculeatus*) also lives in salt water but this little fish is found in tropical seas, around the coral reefs of Australia and Africa. Triggerfish have spines on their backs and undersides which are erected in a defence mechanism. For instance, if one of this species is being chased, it searches for a hole or crevice and once inside erects its spines so that it cannot be dislodged. Should a Triggerfish be caught and swallowed, its spines can kill the predator fish.

A young specimen of the Asiatic species of Arowana has been introduced successfully to the tank containing one of the Amazon variety, though initially there was some fighting. The Asiatic Arowana will grow to a length of about four or five feet. It differs from the Amazonian species in that its scales are more sharply defined and the dorsal fin does not extend so far along the back as in the latter fish.

REPTILE NOTES

We were very pleased to receive some Chameleons in a recent consignment of reptiles from Africa, as it is some time since we have exhibited these fascinating creatures.

The largest of the three specimens now on show is a female Ruwenzori Three-horned Chameleon (*Chamaeleo johnstoni johnstoni*) a species found in the virgin forests of Uganda, the Congo and Ruanda Urundi. She measures between nine and ten inches long and is greenish in colour. The horns are present only in the male of the species and project in a triangular formation from the front of the head, two from the forehead and one from the snout. Shortly after being placed in the vivarium, the female laid a number of eggs which have been removed and are being incubated artificially. Incidentally, the Ruwenzori Three-horned Chameleons lay eggs but there are also species which produce live young.

As yet the other Chameleons, which are a pair, have not been identified. Measuring six to seven inches long, they are both shorter and more slender than the species already described. Their basic skin colour is green with patches of brown on their sides and a single yellow stripe along the ventral surface. All the Chameleons are being fed small locusts and appear to be settling into their new environment.

True Chameleons are found only in the old world. Approximately half of the 80 species in existence live in Africa south of the Sahara, while most of the others are found on the island of Madagascar. Only four species of Chameleons live elsewhere. The Common Chameleon (*Chamaeleo chamaeleon*) is present on the southern fringe of the Mediterranean from Palestine and Egypt along the coast of North Africa to southern Spain and is the species most often kept alive in Europe. Two other species inhabit the south west corner of the Arabian peninsula and one is found in India and Ceylon. In addition the Giant Malagasy Chameleon has been introduced into the Ngong Forest near Nairobi in East Africa.

Probably the most well known fact about Chameleons is that they are able to change the colour of their skins. This is accomplished by the expansion and contraction of the pigment cells in the skin but the range of colour variation in each species is far more limited than is popularly imagined. For instance, Chameleons with greenish skins can only attain different hues of green and similarly brownish forms, brown hues. Nonetheless in their native forest habitat this ability to change colour, coupled with the fact that these animals remain motionless for long periods, is effective camouflage and even in the relatively small area of the zoo vivariums, they are difficult to spot immediately.

Another unusual feature about the Chameleon is its eyes. These can be moved independently of each other, thus enabling the reptile to search for prey and watch out for danger at the same time. All but the pupil is covered with a layer of skin which results in a curious cone-shaped eye. To catch its prey the Chameleon has an exceptionally long tongue, as long in fact as its own body. This coils inside the mouth and has a sticky suction pad at the tip.

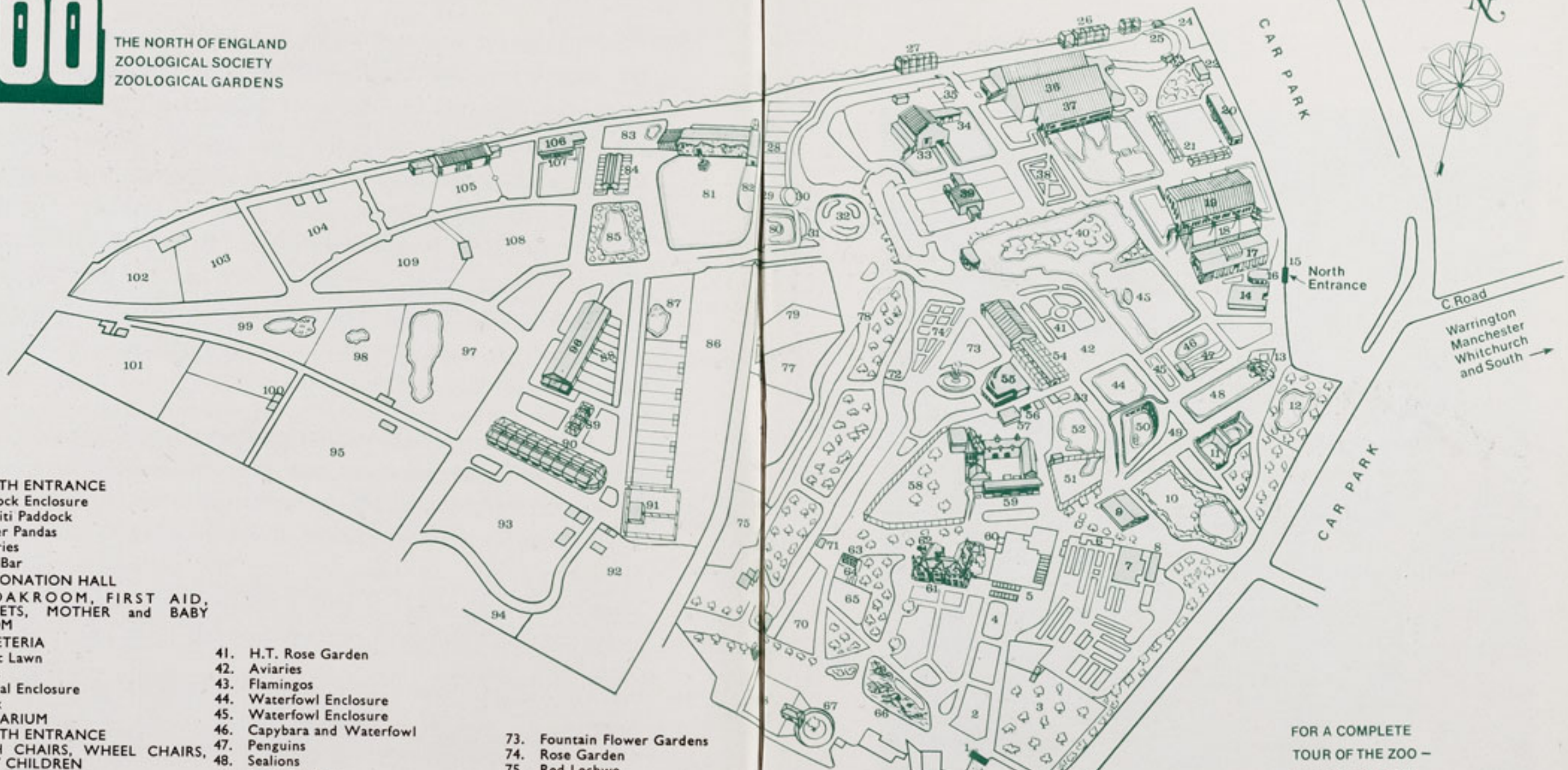
Grasshoppers, locusts and cockroaches form a large part of the insectivorous diet. If a potential victim is out of range, the Chameleon stalks it slowly and carefully, after each step anchoring itself to the branch with its prehensile tail and moving with a peculiar forwards and backwards rocking motion. As soon as it is near enough, its long tongue shoots out rapidly and the insect is snapped into the jaws.

As a matter of interest, in the early 1950's a Jackson's Chameleon lived at the Zoo for almost four years, breaking all longevity records at that time.

In the same consignment from Africa we received a Blanding's Tree Snake (*Boiga blandingii*), a Rhinoceros Viper (*Bitis nasicornis*) and a Gaboon Viper (*Bitis gabonica*).

CHESTER ZOO

THE NORTH OF ENGLAND
ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY
ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS



- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1. SOUTH ENTRANCE | 41. H.T. Rose Garden |
| 2. Peacock Enclosure | 42. Aviaries |
| 3. Wapiti Paddock | 43. Flamingos |
| 4. Lesser Pandas | 44. Waterfowl Enclosure |
| 5. Aviaries | 45. Waterfowl Enclosure |
| 6. Milk Bar | 46. Capybara and Waterfowl |
| 7. CORONATION HALL | 47. Penguins |
| 8. CLOAKROOM, FIRST AID, TOILETS, MOTHER and BABY ROOM | 48. Sealions |
| 9. CAFETERIA | 49. Rock Garden |
| 10. Picnic Lawn | 50. Polar Bears |
| 11. Bears | 51. Tigers |
| 12. Animal Enclosure | 52. Waterfowl Enclosure |
| 13. Kiosk | 53. Anteaters |
| 14. AQUARIUM | 54. BIRD HOUSE |
| 15. NORTH ENTRANCE | 55. FOUNTAIN RESTAURANT |
| 16. PUSH CHAIRS, WHEEL CHAIRS, LOST CHILDREN | 56. Ape Nursery |
| 17. Parrot House | 57. TOILETS |
| 18. Free Flight Aviary | 58. Lions |
| 19. APE HOUSE | 59. SOUVENIR SHOP |
| 20. RAINBOW CAFE AND SHOP | 60. TOILETS |
| 21. Aviaries and Picnic Lawn | 61. OAKFIELD RESTAURANT |
| 22. TOILETS | 62. G.P.O. Telephone |
| 23. Tuatara Exhibit | 63. Gibbon Pen |
| 24. Peccaries | 64. Animal Enclosure |
| 25. Waterbus Halt | 65. Cheetahs |
| 26. Birds of Prey Aviaries | 66. Ornamental Rock Garden |
| 27. Owl Aviary | 67. Malayan Bears |
| 28. Jackal and Hyaena Enclosures | 68. Animal Enclosure |
| 29. Animal Enclosure | 69. Aviary |
| 30. Porcupine Enclosure | 70. Wallabies |
| 31. Coypus | 71. WATERBUS BOOKING OFFICE AND KIOSK |
| 32. Beavers | 72. Waterbus Halt |
| 33. Giraffe House | |
| 34. Camel House | |
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| 36. TROPICAL, NOCTURNAL AND REPTILE HOUSES | |
| 37. CHIMPANZEES | |
| 38. Floribunda Rose Garden | |
| 39. Zebra House | |
| 40. Gibbon Island | |

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|--------------------------------|
| 73. Fountain Flower Gardens |
| 74. Rose Garden |
| 75. Red Lechwe |
| 76. Red Lechwe |
| 77. Deer or Antelope Enclosure |
| 78. Waterbus Halt |
| 79. Zebra and Deer Enclosure |
| 80. Kamchatka Bears |
| 81. ELEPHANTS |
| 82. Hippos |
| 83. Tapirs |
| 84. Small Mammal House |
| 85. Waterfowl Enclosure |
| 86. Ankole Cattle |
| 87. Gazelle Paddocks |
| 88. Storks and Ostriches |
| 89. Baboon Pens |
| 90. Cat House |
| 91. Lions and Tigers |
| 92. Antelope Enclosure |
| 93. Antelope Enclosure |
| 94. Antelope Enclosure |
| 95. Highland Cattle |
| 96. MONKEY HOUSE |
| 97. Waterfowl Enclosure |
| 98. Wallabies and Waterfowl |
| 99. Cranes and Waterfowl |
| 100. Llamas and Alpacas |

FOR A COMPLETE
TOUR OF THE ZOO —
Follow Nos.1-109
from South Entrance
or Nos.16-109
from North Entrance
then return to
Nos.1-14

ANIMAL FEEDING TIMES:

LIONS—3 pm except Fridays

BEARS—3-15 pm

POLAR BEARS—4 pm

SEA LIONS 3 times daily—

2-40 pm, 3-40 pm, 4-40 pm

Animals may be moved from
time to time.



RHINOCEROS VIPER (*Bitis nasicornis*)

K. W. Green, A.R.P.S.

When the Blanding's Tree Snake arrived it was curled up in an old Weaver's nest. As a substitute, one of the small nesting baskets used normally by Java Sparrows was attached to a branch in the vivarium and the snake soon took possession of this. Being a nocturnal reptile, visitors are more likely to find it coiled snugly in this suspended retreat in the daytime.

The range of the Blanding's Tree Snake is in the tropical rain forests of Uganda and western Kenya where it follows an entirely arboreal existence. It is a back-fanged snake, meaning that its poisonous fangs are situated towards the rear of the upper jaw, and prey consists mainly of birds and rodents. Specimens have been recorded at over eight feet but the average length is five feet.

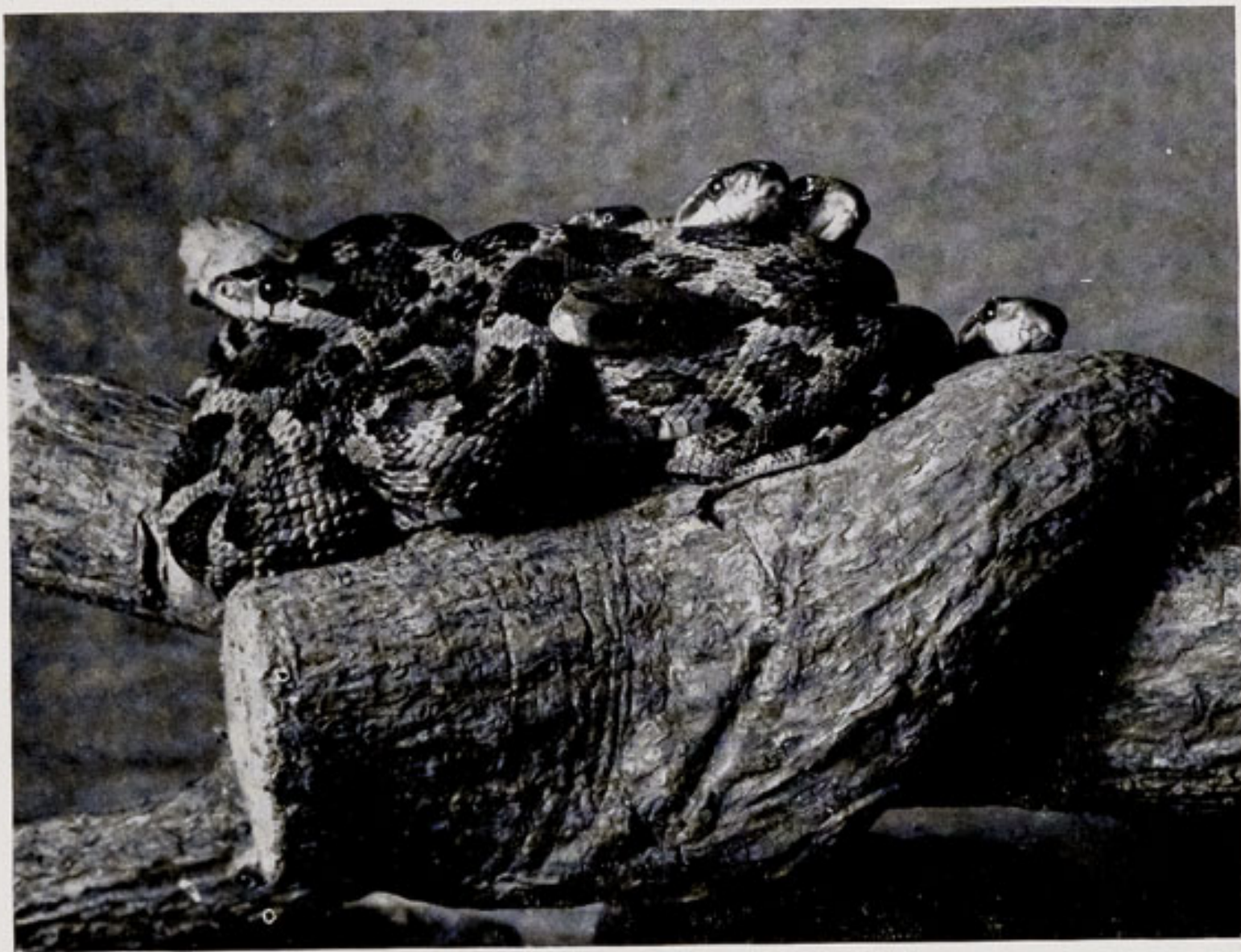
The head of the Blanding's Tree Snake is large in comparison with the body, broad and distinct from the neck. As would be expected with a nocturnal species, the eyes are large and prominent. The body is relatively slender with smooth scales and when angry the snake is able to inflate its neck. In colour these snakes may be light brown or olive with transverse white blotches though some individuals are black and young specimens are mottled. The Blanding's Tree Snake is reported to be a quick and alert reptile which is ready to bite if provoked. Other examples of back-fanged snakes in the collection are the Mangrove (*Boiga dendrophila*) and the Boomslang (*Dispholidus typus*).

The highly venomous Rhinoceros Viper is shown in the photograph on the left. This is a young specimen which at maturity will attain a length of about four feet. More often, in its range in tropical West Africa, the Rhinoceros Viper is found near streams and lakes, which has earned it the alternative name of River Jack. It has a broad head, strikingly colourful body markings and two horns at the tip of the snout which are clearly visible in the photograph.



K. W. Green, A.R.P.S.

YOUNG LEOPARD GECKOS (*Eublepharis macularis*)



K. W. Green, A.R.P.S.

TEXAS RATSNAKES (*Elaphe obsoleta lindheimeri*)

Illustrations above and left show the young Texas Ratsnakes and Leopard Geckos mentioned in earlier issues. The two Leopard Geckos on the left of the photograph are about two months old and beginning to acquire adult markings. The third Gecko is about four weeks younger.

In all, nine Texas Ratsnakes were hatched this year, five of which can be seen in this cluster — we think!

A young Puff Adder (*Bitis arietans*) has been presented to the collection. This rather infamous specimen made the news recently when it bit its 22 year old owner. Chester Zoo is one of the few establishments in this part of the country holding stocks of snake serum and fortunately we were able to supply the hospital authorities with the necessary antidote. We are pleased to report

that the young man is making a good recovery and he decided very wisely that the snake would be safer in our hands.

As this magazine goes to press we have heard reports of another snake bite accident, again with a Puff Adder but this time in the south of England. We understand that the man who was bitten was a dealer in reptiles, but nevertheless wonder how many poisonous snakes are being kept in this country by people inexperienced in handling them and unaware of how deadly their pets really are.

BIRD NOTES

Apart from the rather low numbers of waterfowl reared, this has proved an excellent year for breeding in our Bird Section. Among the many species recorded, we can claim three "firsts" which are described below, as well as a number of other exceptional breedings, including that of the Sun-bittern. During the past month the following chicks have left the nest:

- 2 Weka Rails (*Gallirallus australis greyi*)
- 2 Red-sided Eclectus Parrots (*Lorius pectoralis*)
- 4 Red-billed Weavers (*Quelea quelea*)
- 4 Avadavats (*Amandava amandava*)
- 5 Bengalese Finches (*Louchura striata*)
- 3 Cut-throat Finches (*Amadina fasciata*)
- 3 Greenfinches (*Chloris chloris*)
- 2 Yellow-breasted Buntings (*Emberiza aureola*)
- 1 Hill Mynah (*Gracula religiosa*)
- 1 Glossy Starling (*Lamprocolius nitens*)

Regular readers of the "Zoo News" will recall from the August issue that we acquired a pair of the North Island race of Weka Rail from New Zealand, the male of which mated with a single hen already at the Zoo. At that time we believed she was sitting on at

least two eggs and subsequently two chicks were seen briefly but vanished after a few days. The hen laid again and her second brood of two have now become fairly independent.

Weka Rails incubate for between 20 and 27 days and the eggs are creamy white with scattered brown and purplish blotches. The pair built their nest in a small cave concealed from the public at the back of the large flight aviary, No. 18. When the chicks emerged, they were covered in black down and were very timid, darting into the bushes if anyone approached. One morning, when they were several weeks old, both the chicks and their parents disappeared from the nest site and we were fearing the worst when the whole family was found to have moved to the opposite end of the aviary where another nest had been built. The chicks are now starting to moult into feathers and are also gaining confidence, coming to the front of the aviary in full view of the visitors.

To the best of our knowledge this is the first time the North Island race of Weka Rail has been bred in Great Britain. They have built yet another nest and we hope in a future issue to be able to write about more chicks.

It would seem that we have achieved another "first" in the breeding of Yellow-breasted Buntings. Eight of these birds arrived in August and, after spending a short period in an aviary for observation, were released into the Tropical House. The pair chose a nest site at ground level in a concealed place near to the public pathway and reared two chicks.

In last month's magazine we reported that we had young Lesser Patagonian Conures (*Cyanoliseus patagonus*). From recent enquiries it now seems fairly certain that this is also a first breeding in this country.

The Red-sided Eclectus Parrots have been successful in rearing young for a second year and again these are birds seldom bred in

captivity. Both the chicks are males, the single female hatched last year now being a fine healthy specimen.

The Hill Mynah is the third bred at Chester Zoo. Rather surprisingly, though these birds are very popular pets mainly because of their mimicing abilities, they are not bred very often in captivity. Our first success with this species was in 1967 when two chicks were raised. A number of Hill Mynahs are presented to us each year, some of which have the most hilarious repertoires, but sadly a large percentage cannot be integrated with the Mynahs at the Zoo because the pet birds are too "humanized" and would be killed.

Our Hill Mynahs are accommodated in the Temperate Bird House. At the commencement of the breeding season they are liberated into the house where they begin to form pairs. We watch them carefully and eventually any unmatched birds are caught up, leaving the true pairs. Nestboxes and plenty of nesting materials are provided and in addition we transfer the Mynahs onto an almost entirely insectivorous diet of locusts, mealworms, maggots, beetles, etc. which obviously stimulates breeding.

Presentations to the Bird Section include a female Shelduck (*Tadorna tadorna*) and an Andean Parrakeet (*Bolborhynchus orbynesius*), the latter having a range in subtropical and temperate zones of Peru and Bolivia.

SUBSCRIPTION FORMS

New readers of the "*Chester Zoo News*" who would like to receive the magazine regularly may be interested to know that subscription forms are on display in the souvenir shop. An annual subscription (12 issues) costs 95p postage paid, which can either be handed over the counter or posted with the completed form to The Director-Secretary, Chester Zoo, Chester.

The following notice is displayed on several boards in the grounds

Please comply with it at all times.

FEEDING OF ANIMALS AND BIRDS

IT IS AN OFFENCE for any member of the public to offer food of any description to any Animal or Bird in Chester Zoo.

This regulation is made for the sake of the health of the Animals and Birds. Since the NO FEEDING rule was introduced, the number of deaths has dropped appreciably and sickness, due to wrong feeding has been virtually eliminated.

What you may be offering to an animal may only be a sweet or an inoffensive piece of bread, but it can mean a death sentence for the animal. For example, a cough drop, which may relieve your cough, can cause instant death to many Animals and Birds in the Zoo.

You must not lose sight of the fact that you are only one of over a million visitors who visit the Zoo annually. If for instance an elephant had one bun from only one tenth of a day's visitors during the summer, it would eat between three and four thousand. You can guess the result.

We realise what a temptation it is for visitors, particularly children, to feed our Animals and Birds and this is why we invite members of the public to be present at the official feeding times.

This is a polite warning to you, asking you not to feed the animals. If you ignore it, the Keepers are authorised to ask you to leave the Gardens.

If you really love Animals and Birds, you will appreciate the wisdom of the ruling — No Feeding by members of the public.

PLEASE HELP US TO KEEP OUR COLLECTION OF ANIMALS NOT ONLY ALIVE BUT IN FIRST CLASS CONDITION.

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