
“Our Zoo News”

and Guide.

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June was certainly not the best of months as far as weather was concerned, but it is very gratifying to know that despite the showery and cold weather, the attendance at the Zoo was substantially up on the same period last year.

The popularity of the Zoo has grown considerably these last few years, and we feel by this, that our efforts to please the public are now being rewarded.

A young black fawn was observed recently in the Fallow Deer Enclosure. It looked a very healthy specimen and was not quite so shy as the fawn

which was born last year. Fallow Deer vary considerably in colour, but all our stock with the exception of the fawn just mentioned are of the light brown variety and well spotted, but of course these light brown deer vary with the season of the year.

Our Wapiti are growing rapidly and the male is now growing his antlers, warning us that soon we shall have to think about providing these animals with a new enclosure. They are very happy at the moment with the Fallow Deer, but when the rutting season starts we feel that we might expect trouble if they should then all be together.

The Sea-Lion Pool which is providing a very great attraction became very cloudy with algae, so we introduced some daphnia. We do not know for certain whether it was due to this daphnia, but after it had been in for several weeks the pool suddenly cleared, and in a matter of hours became crystal clear. It has now been clear for two or three weeks, and we are hoping that it will remain so, for it adds considerably to the visitors' enjoyment when they can see these wonderful mammals swimming below the water.

We note with interest that the Egyptian Geese have raised another family this year. Like the Jackdaws, the Egyptian Geese can be found almost anywhere in the Zoo, as they fly about with such freedom and confidence, and it is quite common to see these geese perching in trees, on buildings, telegraph poles, and such like.

These geese can be, and are, very pugnacious at times, especially a breeding pair, and this last Spring we actually saw a gander chasing an Ostrich all round the Enclosure. On another occasion we observed this same gander on the back of a Wallaby which leaped in great bounds in an effort to dislodge its unwanted rider; although these birds are aggressive they are very attractive and interesting.

Many of the parrakeets have successfully reared young this year. The Rock Peplars produced a nest of five, while Red Rumps, Rosellas and Cockatiels have all contributed their quota. Many new aviaries are required and we are doing everything possible to meet this shortage, and hope before long to make a start on a new series of aviaries which will be permanent homes for many of the tropical specimens.

THE REPTILE HOUSE.

One of the most outstanding events since our last issue was the opening of the Reptile House on July 1st. This has proved very popular, and in the first twelve days has had more than four thousand visitors. The snakes are safely housed behind armour-plated glass in cases which have double trap doors, so that there is no danger of escape. Each case is spacious and the vegetation is as similar as is possible to that which would be found in the reptiles' natural surroundings.

The poisonous snakes in the Reptile House include the GREEN MAMBA, a tree snake found mostly in the high forest country of West Africa. This snake is about six feet in length, and about one inch thick. It is very attractive in colour, especially immediately after it has cast its skin. It is velvety green and its tail is almost yellow with dark edged scales which give it a plaited appearance. The venom, which is deadly, is in the fangs which are near the tip of the upper jaw, and these fangs are fine and needle-sharp. The effect of the venom is very rapid on heart action and breathing, and causes paralysis.

More poisonous snakes to be seen are the BLACK COBRAS, also from West Africa. These are about seven feet in length, and when annoyed they will rear up and expand their hood in the same manner as the Indian Cobras of which most of you will have seen pictures. Like the Green Mamba, these snakes have poisonous fangs, and the poison has the same effect as that of the Mamba.

Another poisonous snake is the GABOON VIPER, an inhabitant of the forest country of West Africa. It is about five feet long and has a large triangular head. Its skin is made up of a diamond pattern

in brown and yellow-brown. The poison from this snake acts principally on the blood and tissues causing internal haemorrhage.

Let us now mention some of the less unpleasant species of snakes in the Reptile House—the non-poisonous types. These include African Pythons, Indian Pythons, Royal Python and Boa Constrictor. The largest specimen is an African Python, about seventeen feet long. This is the only non-poisonous snake at present in our possession which might be dangerous to human beings. Both Pythons and Boa Constrictor kill their prey by wrapping themselves round it and squeezing it to death. Certainly no one has any desire to be squeezed to death by our large African Python.

The most attractive of our Pythons is the ROYAL PYTHON, a native of West Africa, which has a clear pattern in buff, dark brown and white. Another beautifully marked snake is the BOA CONSTRICTOR, a native of South America. This snake is about ten feet in length; and is pale brown with dark brown markings on the top, and the sides are a series of large dark brown spots with light centres, and on the tail the markings are of a brick red colour.

TWO MONITOR LIZARDS are also on view. These have pretty green and yellow markings. They have long tails which are very powerful, and a lash from these can be very painful, otherwise these lizards are harmless.

The largest case in the Reptile House contains a large pool in which are MISSISSIPPI ALLIGATORS and a NILE CROCODILE. The crocodile is distinguished from the alligators by its much narrower nose.

There are also two exhibits not of the Reptile Family at present housed in the Reptile House—a

Mynah and two Marmosets. These have been put here because they need the tropical atmosphere. The MYNAH is very similar in size and appearance to the blackbird, but has a bright yellow streak each side of the head. In captivity the Mynah becomes quite tame and can become far more talkative than a parrot, pronouncing the words very distinctly. Our Mynah is quite a new acquisition but he is very friendly, and we hope that very soon he will become used to the visitors and keep them entertained by talking to them, as he does to several members of the Zoo Staff.

The MARMOSETS are miniature monkeys. They have soft silky hair, mottled with black, grey and brown, and a long bushy tail ringed with black and grey. These animals have broad tufts of hair behind their ears which give them an unusual appearance. They are attractive little animals and great favourites with children.

When visiting the Reptile House, visitors should scrutinize each case carefully, as sometimes the reptiles are coiled up in the corners of their case or around the branch of a tree, whilst a favourite resting place of the cobras is along the roof of their case. Every case in the Reptile House contains an exhibit so if you think one case is empty, look again—carefully.

OUR FRIENDS THE MONKEYS.

Readers will remember that last November the Zoo finally managed to get the necessary material to complete the new Monkey House.

Since the Winter, it has altered both in appearance and in inmates. The Monkeys have both indoor and

outdoor quarters, and can be seen by the Public in either. Each species has two large cages, which are connected by a small sliding door. In the Winter they are confined to the inner cage which is specially heated to keep them at an even temperature. They are separated from the Public by a long corridor, the walls of which consist of heavy armoured glass, which serves the double purpose of keeping the heat in, and preventing the monkeys from coming into direct contact with the spectators, and so lessening the risk of catching infectious germs. Monkeys are very susceptible to cold germs, which in the Winter can prove fatal to many of them as they soon develop severe pneumonia.

In the Summer the communicating door between the two compartments is rolled back, and the monkeys can play about both inside and outside. The outer cages are somewhat larger than the inner ones, and the front consists of thick strong wire, and the monkeys spend many hours amusing themselves and the visitors by performing unspeakable antics while hanging and swinging on the wire. Here again they are separated from the Public by quite a wide natural border of shrubs and other carefully tended plants. There is also a wooden fence, so that accidents like the grabbing of Mother's straw hat, pulling sister's plaits, or biting baby's fingers, do not occur—though mind you it is not always the monkey who is to blame. Not so long ago a man actually climbed over the fence and attempted to give a monkey a lighted cigarette, and was only prevented from carrying out this ridiculous foolish prank by the timely arrival of the Curator. Due to the stupidity of some people, the poor unsuspecting little monkey might have been badly injured.

To return to the inmates of the new Monkey House. The first acquaintance we make on entering is that of a little brown fellow, whose delight it is

to capture one's attention by bounding round his cage, and then proceeding to sit and pull the most ugly faces. He is a little brown Capuchin, and derives his name from a patch of hair which forms a type of monk's cowl over his head. The Capuchins, you know were, or rather still are, a famous order of monks. The Capuchin monkeys are a dark brown in colour, with long silky hair, but their arms, legs, feet, hands, tails and faces are black. Their natural home is in Brazil, Columbia and Guiana. They live in the forests in small groups, and only come down to the ground from the trees in order to drink. Though wild and destructive in their wild life, they become very affectionate pets, and in days gone by, it was generally this type of monkey that the organ-grinders used to dress up to beg for pennies. Our little Capuchin was brought to England from British Guiana, by a lady in February this year, and is by far the most lovable and affectionate monkey we have at present. His diet consists of fresh fruit, stoned dates, sultanas, tomatoes, crisp lettuce, and boiled milk, and of course he has to be kept especially warm until he becomes acclimatised.

In the next cage there are two *Calatrixus* monkeys, one small and one large. The large one goes by the name of "Cheetah", and was brought home from Africa by a sailor. Her companion seemed to be a poor little fellow whom his fellow monkeys were always annoying, however, he and "Cheetah" get along extremely well and are the best of friends.

Next we have four very attractive animals. They are a light smoky-grey colour with white patches on the head which give a crown-like appearance, hence the name White-crowned Mangabeys. These are natives of West Africa, but they were given their name many years ago by a French Naturalist, after a town in Madagascar, Mangabe, under the impression

that they were natives of the island, and in spite of the error the name has remained. These monkeys are very clever little creatures, and always seem to have their tails which are very long, turned forward over the body and they amuse the visitors by dancing and tumbling in a hundred different ways.

We have a number of *Calatrixus* monkeys which also come from West Africa, and are sometimes known as the green monkeys. The colour of the fur is a mixture of black and yellow, and the upper parts of the body seem to have a distinct greenish hue, the hands and feet are generally black, and the throat and underside of the tail are usually yellow and in some cases almost orange.

They are about the size of large cats, and are by far the hardiest of the monkey tribe. Although generally quite good tempered and mischievous, they are inclined to be morose and vicious at times, and they think nothing of having a sly dig at their keeper whenever he gets near enough. One of the largest ones, known as Skipper can be quite sociable, and he can also be quite the opposite and gets spasms when he sits baring his teeth and snarling, chattering incessantly in loud angry tones to whoever happens to be in the vicinity.

Next we have Adolf, a Javan monkey, so named because of his unpleasant manner. By far the largest monkey at present in our possession, he is a dark grey, and has a large ugly face, and a mouth full of the most wicked looking teeth. He has a habit of sitting outside clasping the wire on the front of his cage with his hands and his feet. There he sits for hours on end, pulling faces and chattering, and visitors who annoy him by trying to imitate his chatter will probably be thoroughly alarmed at the effect it will have, for Adolf uttering the most fearful

noises, and showing his gruesome teeth, leaps round the cage, bouncing on his wooden beams, and tugging at the bars like a maniac; the beams shake and tremble, and his companions in the next cages sit with the most stupid expressions on their faces, and the poor visitor who has probably quite innocently started this commotion, silently and sometimes obviously frightened hurries away. Adolf then ceases his display of rage and calmly takes up his sitting position waiting for his next unwary visitor.

The last cage in the Monkey House is occupied by two sandy coloured little creatures; the larger one is known as Micky and has a swing fixed up in his outer cage. He was brought home from India by a sailor, and his smaller companion was presented to the Zoo by a lady not so very long ago. Micky took very kindly to his new friend and they are becoming very fond of each other, although Micky occasionally alarms his smaller companion by his habit of suddenly bounding from one compartment to the other without the slightest warning. When this occurs, the young monkey sits on the lowest ledge in the indoor cage with his tiny hands clasped, rolling his eyes mournfully heavenwards. However, Micky is quick to see the upset he is causing and usually ceases his wild leaping, and sits down looking thoroughly astonished and a little disgusted at his small companion. These two attractive little fellows are Rhesus monkeys, and are natives of India, where they dwell in large numbers in the forest. In some districts they are regarded as sacred and are encouraged to dwell near the Temples. Though our specimens are a light brown, they do get quite a reddish tinge as they get older. They are excellent swimmers and live on fruit of all descriptions, leaves and small insects.

J. MOFFATT.

THE MYNAH.

Some weeks ago someone presented the Zoo with a Mynah. The first time I saw it, it looked to me for all the world like an ordinary English Blackbird, but I was not long in finding my mistake, the Mynah saw to that—no offence meant to the Blackbird of course. For some days this interesting little creature was kept in the house, and during that time it kept the Zoo Staff fully entertained, and everyone became very fond of it. The little bird is the most fascinating fellow, he sings beautifully and talks far more clearly than many of the Zoo's parrots. While their "Hello's" are shrill and piercing, this little chap has a soft husky tone, and the first time the onlooker hears his gentle, slow "Hello" they are inclined to start and wonder where it came from, and as if he realises the sensation he is causing the cheeky bird lifts his head and repeats "Hel-lo" and the onlooker gazes unbelievably at the small, not very spectacular, bird. But that is not the only gift he has, for the Mynah is a very fine mimic and can repeat any whistle he hears, and besides his incessant chatter can sing equally as well as our Blackbird.

The Mynah is about ten inches in length, and has a plumage of a glossy almost greenish black; a small array of ruffled feathers give the impression of a small crest on the head. The bill is a bright orange, and the thin legs yellow. Its most distinctive features are the bright ochre-yellow patches surrounding the eye, and the snow white streak under the wings.

This bird is a native of India, Ceylon and the Malay Isles. Members of the same family are known to be sacred to Ram Deo, one of the Hindu Dieties, but the common Mynah, like our pet is to be found on the edge of the jungle and in the small native villages. It nests rather like our English Birds in holes in trees, and in the eaves of houses, during the months of May, the eggs being a pale greeny blue.

Our Mynah has his own fine little home in the Reptile House with a miniature tree and pool, but he is also allowed to fly at will in the spacious domain which belongs to the Crocodiles and Alligators, and if not at home can almost certainly be seen flitting amid many coloured plants or strutting on the green grass and sand which surrounds the pool.

If he happens to notice you standing opposite his case he will quickly fly on to his tree in his own home and say "Hello", and when he has captured your attention, will most likely oblige with a song; he might even condescend to answer the usual question "How are you" by saying "Very well, thank you." He can manage this quite well, is very tame and likes a lot of attention.

His diet, as visitors will notice, consists almost entirely of fruit.

J. MOFFATT.

MORE ABOUT CHRISTY.

For some time now Christy, the lioness who was reared in the house has been out of public view as she refused to mix with the other lionesses in the open air enclosure, and caused such a disturbance amongst them that she had to be removed from the enclosure to a home of her own. Although unfriendly with the other lionesses she has maintained her friendliness with human beings, especially with Mrs. Mottershead and her daughter who reared her. Christy is like a small child and loves to be petted and made a fuss of. Sometimes one wonders whether part of her antagonism towards the other lionesses was due to jealousy—perhaps she felt that they would distract attention from her and did not wish for any competition in popularity.

Anyway Christy evidently decided that it was time she was brought once more to the public's notice and this time she chose a very effective method. She produced two very attractive cubs. Having done this and aroused the admiration of every one here, and having received the compliments she felt were due to her and some extra petting, she found that the cubs, too, were receiving a lot of attention, in fact it looked as though the idea of raising a family might not be such a good one especially if the cubs were going to distract attention from "Mama." Christy therefore decided to forget all about her cubs and just refused to take any notice of them, so they had to be taken away, and like their mother, reared in the house. This time Mr. Mottershead's elder daughter, Muriel, took on the task of looking after them and it is certainly thanks to her that they have been reared.

It is no easy task rearing two lion cubs. They are quite as troublesome as small babies and need just as much attention. When they are born they are

like small kittens and their eyes do not open for about ten days. They have to be bottle-fed every few hours including through the night and great care must be taken as they are very susceptible to colds. The cubs, which are now two months old, are lively young specimens and are extremely playful. Although still sleeping in the house, on days when it is not too cold they are put outside on public view. They have been named "Maya" and "Marga" and are to be christened by Nomad on the 28th of July.

E.M.N.

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