



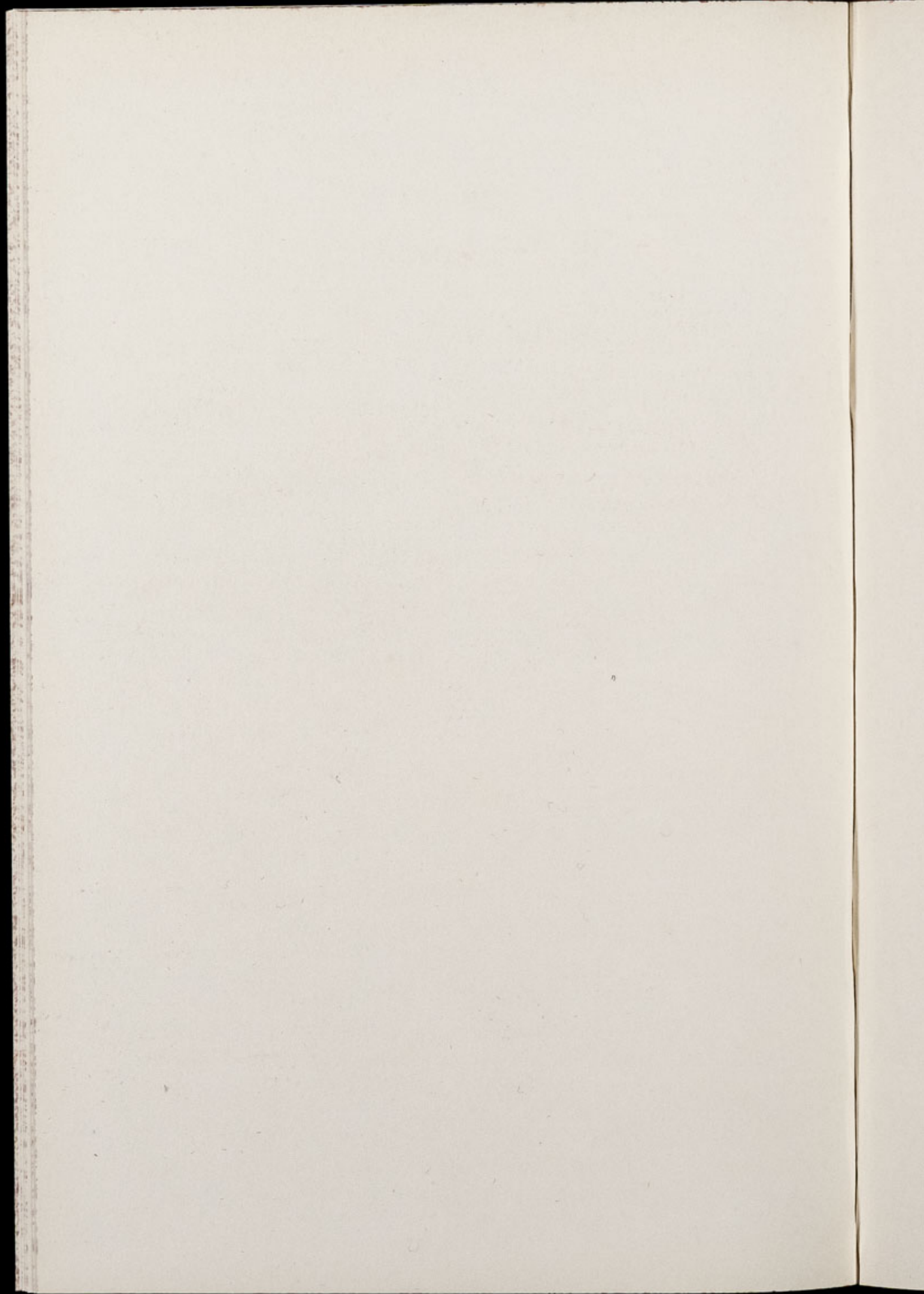
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Chester Zoo News

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

October, 1964

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Editorial

We are happy to record that, for the second year in succession, over one million visitors have paid for admission to Chester Zoo. Not only have we passed the million, but we have also broken our record attendance figure set up last year and there are still two and a half months of 1964 to run. To the 31st December, 1963, 1,017,037 visitors had paid for admission to the Gardens, whilst on the 13th October, 1964, 1,053,196 visitors have already passed through the gates.

The Zoo's Party Booking Office reports an all-round increase in the size of individual parties, as well as an increase in the number of reservations. Although very much "behind the scenes," the Party Office is one of the busiest corners of the Zoo throughout the season.

CONTENTS:

<i>Page two</i>	News from Mr. and Mrs. Mottershead in America.
<i>Page four</i>	Zoo Babies and New Arrivals, Pintailed Whydah.
<i>Page six</i>	Baby Lowland Gorillas, The Boomslang.
<i>Page nine</i>	Rescued Razorbill.
<i>Page ten</i>	Aquarium News.
<i>Page thirteen</i>	Sunbirds.

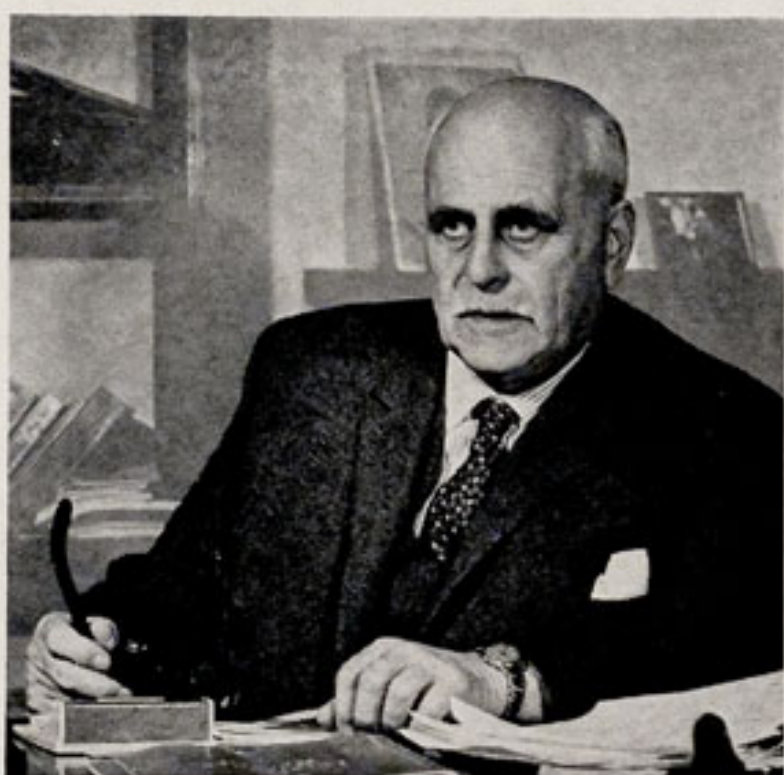
COVER: Our Cover Picture this month shows part of Chester Zoo's lively group of Squirrel Monkeys.

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NEWS FROM MR. AND MRS. MOTTERSHEAD IN AMERICA

(We mentioned in the September magazine that our Director-Secretary and his wife had left on a fifteen-week trip, which would eventually take them to Sydney, Australia, for the Nineteenth Annual Conference of the International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens. The first part of their trip has been spent in the United States and Canada).



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

MR. MOTTERSHEAD

Although they have a very full schedule, Mr. and Mrs. Mottershead have found time to keep us informed of their activities and letters have been reaching Chester almost daily.

On the 24th September, Mr. and Mrs. Mottershead attended the opening of the new Aquatic Bird House at the Bronx Zoo, New York, before going on to the Catskill

Game Farm. Visits were paid to the Detroit Zoo on Saturday, 26th September, and the Chicago Zoo on Tuesday, 29th September.

During a visit to the Milwaukee Zoo, two days later, Mr. Mottershead was particularly interested in three large domed Glasshouses which were being erected. These are eightyfive feet high and are designed to house tropical plants.

Sunday, 3rd October, saw Mr. and Mrs. Mottershead in Dallas, where Mr. Mottershead enjoyed a short discussion with officers of the Dallas Zoological Society and the Dallas Park Board. The following day Mr. Mottershead gave a talk, illustrated with colour slides of Chester Zoo, to over a hundred members of the Dallas Zoological Society and Zoo Staff. In the afternoon of Monday, 4th October, the Mayor of Dallas presented Mr. Mottershead with a Certificate making him an Honorary Citizen of Dallas.

The next stop on their trip was Calgary, where they visited the Zoological Gardens and on the 7th of October, Mr. and Mrs. Mottershead left by train for Banff. In Banff Mr. Mottershead reported "glorious weather and lovely scenery". From there Mr. and Mrs. Mottershead travelled one hundred and fifty miles to the Columbia Ice Fields (height seven thousand two hundred feet), and were delighted to see Wapiti, Deer, Moose and many Beaver Lodges in their natural setting.



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

"JACK"

In our next magazine we hope to give readers further news of Mr. and Mrs. Mottershead's trip. They are obviously having a wonderful time and we are looking forward to an interesting film show on their return.

CHIMP BABY

Having accepted the responsibilities of parenthood for the first time in many years, "Meg" the Chimpanzee is proving to be a 'model' mother. Her tiny daughter is a beautiful little animal and Meg seems to be very proud of her. She will hold the baby out to

her Keepers as if inviting admiration and when suitably complimented will wrap the baby in her arms once more. Meg and her baby share one of the large indoor enclosures in the Ape House and spend the afternoons out of doors when the sun is shining.

The photograph on the previous page shows "Jack", Meg's fifth baby born at Chester Zoo, on 30th October, 1963.

ZOO BABIES AND NEW ARRIVALS

Two baby Acouchys (*Myoprocta acouchy*), members of the rodent family, were born in the Small Mammal House on Tuesday, 6th October.

"Joy", the baby Llama whose birth was recorded last month, is growing fast and delighting autumn visitors to the Zoo with her antics. In the photograph opposite she is trotting over to inspect the camera.

Six Leopard Tortoises and three Hinged-back Tortoises were added to the Reptile Collection on the 29th September.

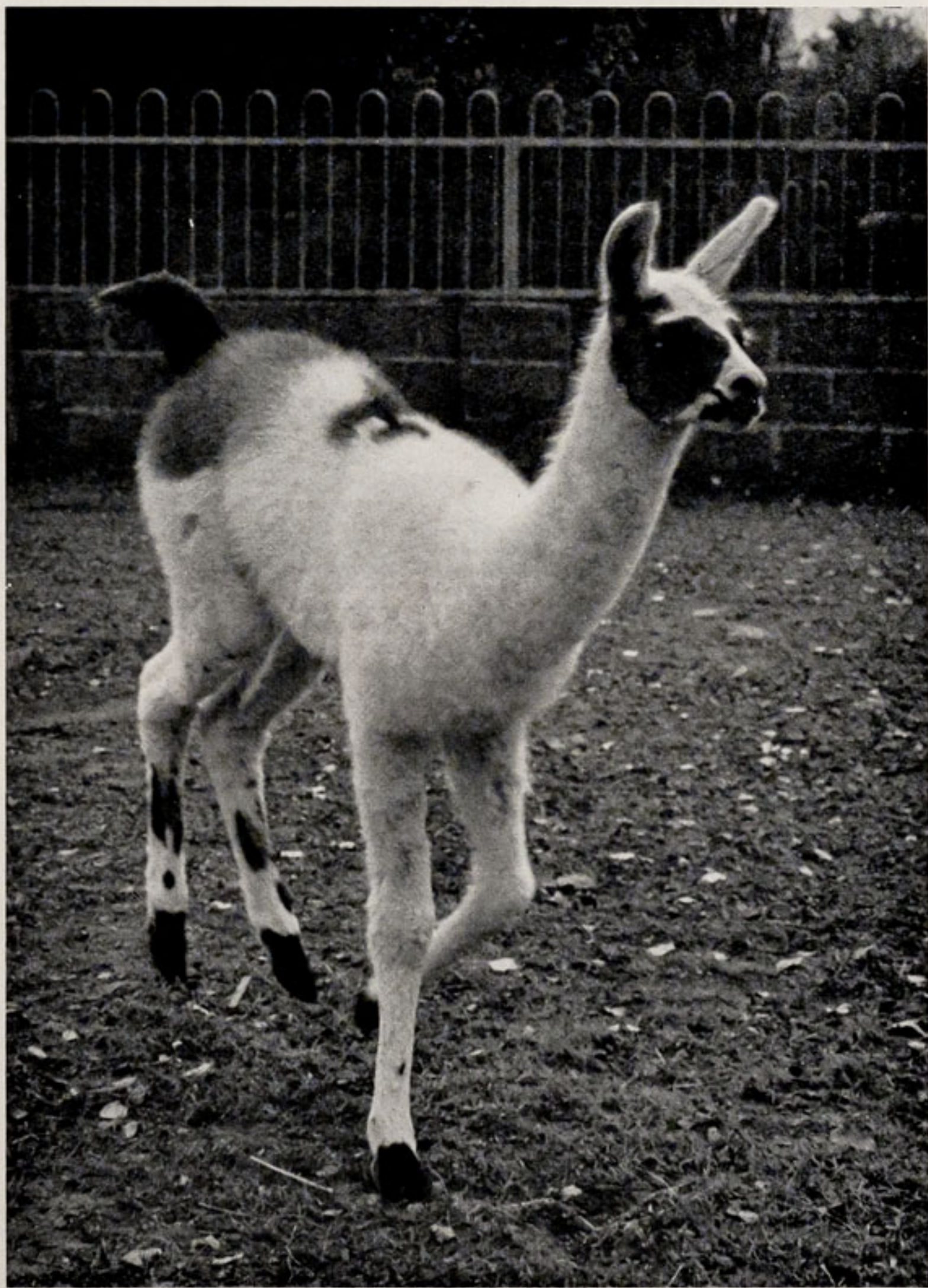
A Yellow-breasted Chat and a Parula Warbler, both natives of North America, were presented by Captain Chaloner of the S.S. SYLVANIA on the 12th of October.

A member of the Zoo Staff had his recent visit to the island of Anglesey cut short when he found a young Razorbill lying by the roadside. The Razorbill is now a temporary member of Chester Zoo's Bird Collection — see page Nine.

PINTAILED WHYDAH BRED IN TROPICAL HOUSE

On page two of the September magazine we mentioned that a nest had been built by the Pintailed Whydah. As Aviculturists will have realised this was an error, the nest was actually built by a Yellow-backed Whydah. Pintailed Whydahs, like the Cuckoo, are parasitic and lay their eggs in the nests of other birds.

A pair of Pintailed Whydahs were observed in the vicinity of a Red-eared Waxbill nest and we hoped that an egg would be laid there. Imagine our delight when a fledgling Pintailed Whydah was seen flying about the Tropical House. It is now in adult plumage, although we have yet to determine the sex of the youngster.



"JOY"

Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

THE BABY LOWLAND GORILLAS

Both the baby Lowland Gorillas — "Turpin" and "Gogal" — which arrived in April of this year, have put on weight at an amazing rate. The increase is particularly noticeable in the female, Gogal, who is of course eighteen months older than her little companion. At first Turpin was somewhat nervous of his larger mate but now he can more than hold his own in their boisterous games.

Whilst attempting to take the photographs on the following page Mrs. Sorby was continually interrupted by Gogal's determination to explore the mysteries of the camera. Time and time again Mrs. Sorby would be on the point of "shooting", only to find that Gogal had closed in and was peering into the camera lens.

THE BOOMSLANG

Exhibited in the Tropical House in a cage with other arboreal snakes is an African Boomslang or Tree Snake, (*Dispholidus typus*). This specimen is a greyish brown colour, as is usual with the female of the species. However in the male there is a considerable colour variation, including different shades of green.

The Boomslang is very well adapted to life in the trees, being extremely slender and having a prehensile tail. One of the best distinguishing features are the eyes, which are comparatively large and have round, yellowish-coloured pupils. The average length of a Boomslang is four to four and a half feet, but specimens six feet long have been known.

For many years the Boomslang was thought to be a non-poisonous species and was handled with complete disregard for safety. During the early nineteen hundreds several people, either keepers or trappers, were bitten with fatal results. A human being bitten by a Boomslang could expect to experience the following:—

"In addition to the usual pain and swelling, blood oozed from the mucous surfaces of the mouth, nose, stomach, bladder and bowels and accumulated in the tissues, causing coagulated patches under the skin. The areas thus affected included an eye, both forearms and part of the abdomen, hip and thigh. He lingered on in this state, bordering between life and death, until the sixth day, when a slow improvement began to manifest itself. In three weeks



"GOGAL"

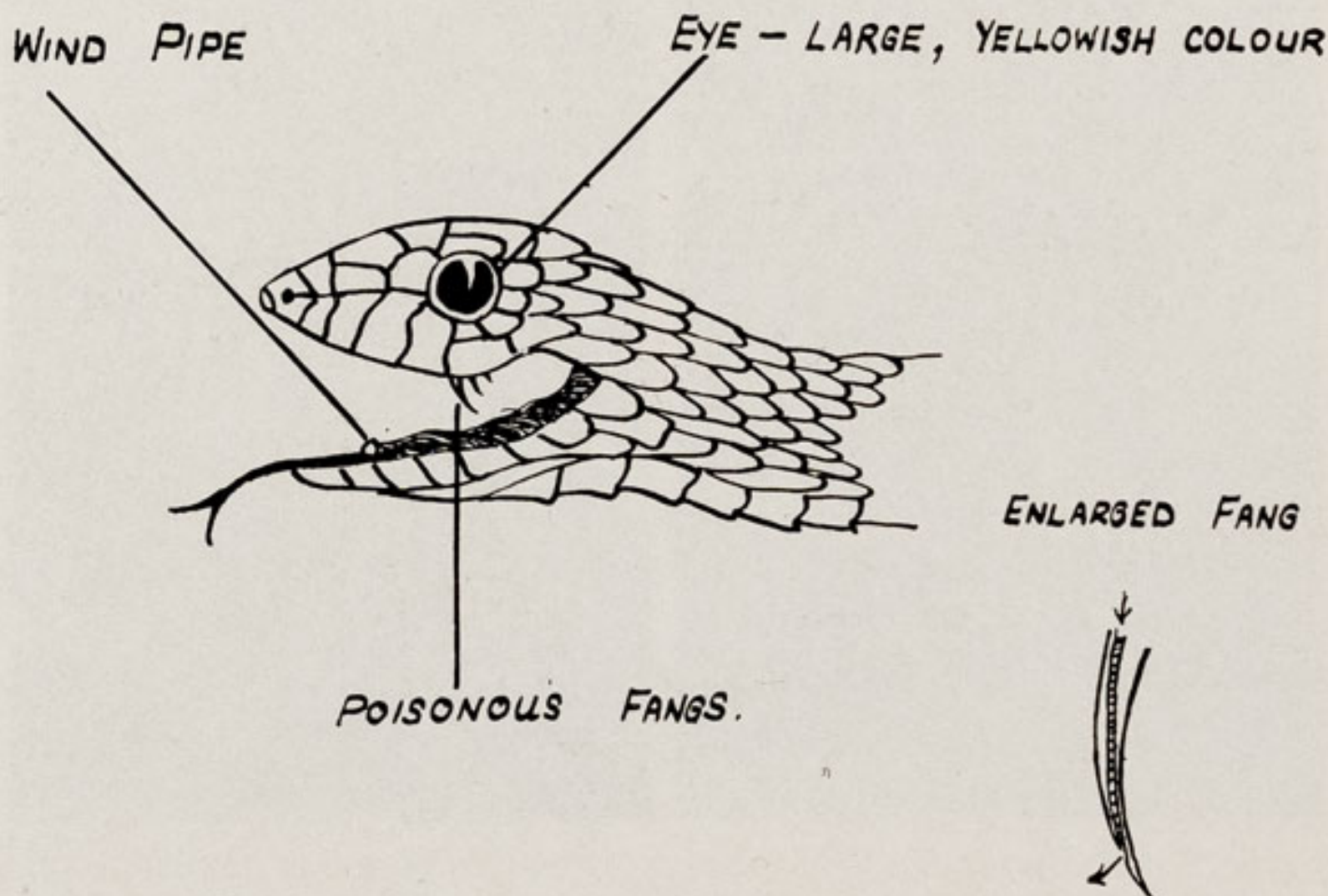


"TURPIN"



Photographs by Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

HEAD OF BOOMSLANG



M. F. Coupe

he was discharged from hospital but it was almost three months before a complete recovery was made."

(Summary of report taken from "*Snakes of South Africa*", describing the symptoms of a keeper who was bitten in the forearm).

Fortunately Boomslangs are not at all aggressive and only attempt to bite if annoyed or roughly handled. The poison fangs are situated towards the rear of the mouth, therefore a Boomslang has to get a good grip before it can inject a lethal dose of venom into a human being. However, the venom is extremely powerful, being mainly haematotoxic in action, thus destroying the blood cells.

Various experiments have been conducted recently, to find out how powerful the Boomslang's venom is. The fatal dose for a pigeon was found to be 0.0002 mg. whereas it took 0.125 mg of Mamba venom to kill a pigeon. On the other hand, Mamba venom is much more potent where small mammals are concerned.

Boomslangs are distributed throughout Africa and spend most of their time in trees. They can swim well and sometimes cross a stream or river when searching for food. In the wild state their food consists of birds (mainly fledglings), small mammals and lizards. At Chester we feed frogs and small mice, which are taken easily.

RESCUED RAZORBILL

From time to time we receive sea birds which have been "oiled up", due to the pollution of the sea with residual crude oil, discharged by tankers and other vessels. The most recent of these unfortunate birds was a young Razorbill, found on the isle of Anglesey, off the coast of North Wales.

He had crawled out of the sea and was lying by the roadside, unable to fly or swim because his feathers were coated with oil. Fortunately this bird was not too badly affected and appeared to be reasonably healthy. He was brought back to the Zoo and placed in the bird hospital.

First we had to remove the oil from the Razorbill's feathers. This was done by gently bathing the bird with hot water and detergent. Although we were able to clean his feathers it will be some considerable time before the bird will be able to fly, as all the natural oil has gone out of his feathers. Many birds never survive being "oiled up", due to the fact that they try to clean themselves and swallow some of the crude oil in the process.

The major oil companies no longer discharge residual crude oil into the sea, but have devised a new use for this previously unwanted material. Smaller companies still discharge into the sea, but it is hoped to bring them into line in the near future. Cargo ships are also liable to discharge oil and sunken ships, especially tankers, will release oil when disturbed by storms.

The Razorbill is a species especially prone to oiling up, as it feeds and spends a considerable time hunting in the sea. In many of



M. F. Coupe

RAZORBILL

their features they resemble small Penguins but, unlike Penguins which cannot fly, Razorbills have small wings and can fly very well. The wings are used in much the same way as the flippers of a Penguin, whilst the birds are swimming and diving in pursuit of fish, which form the major part of the Razorbill's diet.

Razorbills can be found breeding on many cliffs around the coasts of the British Isles. They do not build a nest but lay their one or, occasionally, two eggs in a bare rock crevice.

AQUARIUM NEWS

As regular readers will have noted, there was no news from the Aquarium in last month's magazine, so we will attempt to make up for the omission by including a "bumper" article in this issue.

It is at this time of year, while the Aquarium is comparatively empty of visitors, that the keen-eyed observer may watch the fish at their best. The fish display with vigour the full-blooded colours that only come when there is abundant live food and the minimum of disturbance. They are completely at ease and act in an altogether natural manner. Now one may make the most accurate observations regarding breeding, feeding and other aspects of life amongst the species on exhibition for, during Chester Zoo's busy season, their behaviour is anything but natural.

During the next few months a large number of the fish, notably the Cichlids, will start spawning and rearing young and there will be a general increase in the population of the Aquarium. At present there is a family of Zebra Cichlids, *Cichlasoma nigrofasciatum*, on show. Most of the other Cichlids have shown marked interest in spawning recently.

The Astronotus or Marbled Cichlids, *Astronotus ocellatus*, are perhaps the most active and are constantly clearing areas of the tank floor, freeing it of anything moveable. Even quite large pieces of rock are shunted across the tank. Unfortunately their present tank is unsuitable for spawning, because of the various other large fish which constantly disturb the Cichlids in their courtship displays and prevent them from settling down to the serious

business of spawning. We may eventually separate the best pair and leave them to their own devices in a large tank where they can rear a family, which could number anything up to three hundred individuals.

Rather an unusual occurrence came to our notice one morning recently. A male Zebra Cichlid and a female Firemouth Cichlid, *Cichlasoma meeki*, had cleared a site on the base of their tank and it was obvious from the protruding external genitalia that they were preparing to spawn. Immediately it was decided to separate this peculiar pair from the other fish in the tank.

A pair of Blue Acaras, which had been living harmoniously in the peaceful depths of a large tank furnished with slabs of sandstone, were unceremoniously hoisted out in a net and transferred to a tank containing Severum Cichlids and a Snakehead. The tank thus vacated was hurriedly cleaned up and a flower pot placed in one corner. Next the Firemouth and the Zebra Cichlid were transferred to their new home, where they were left undisturbed to recover from the excitement of being caught.

After a cursory glance at the flowerpot — in which it had been hoped they would spawn — they started investigating the rest of the tank. Later that afternoon they were observed cleaning the vertical side of a pillar of sandstone and swimming very closely up and down its surface to ensure that it suited their purposes. Approximately half an hour later the first few eggs were laid by the Firemouth in a very haphazard manner and were promptly eaten by the male.

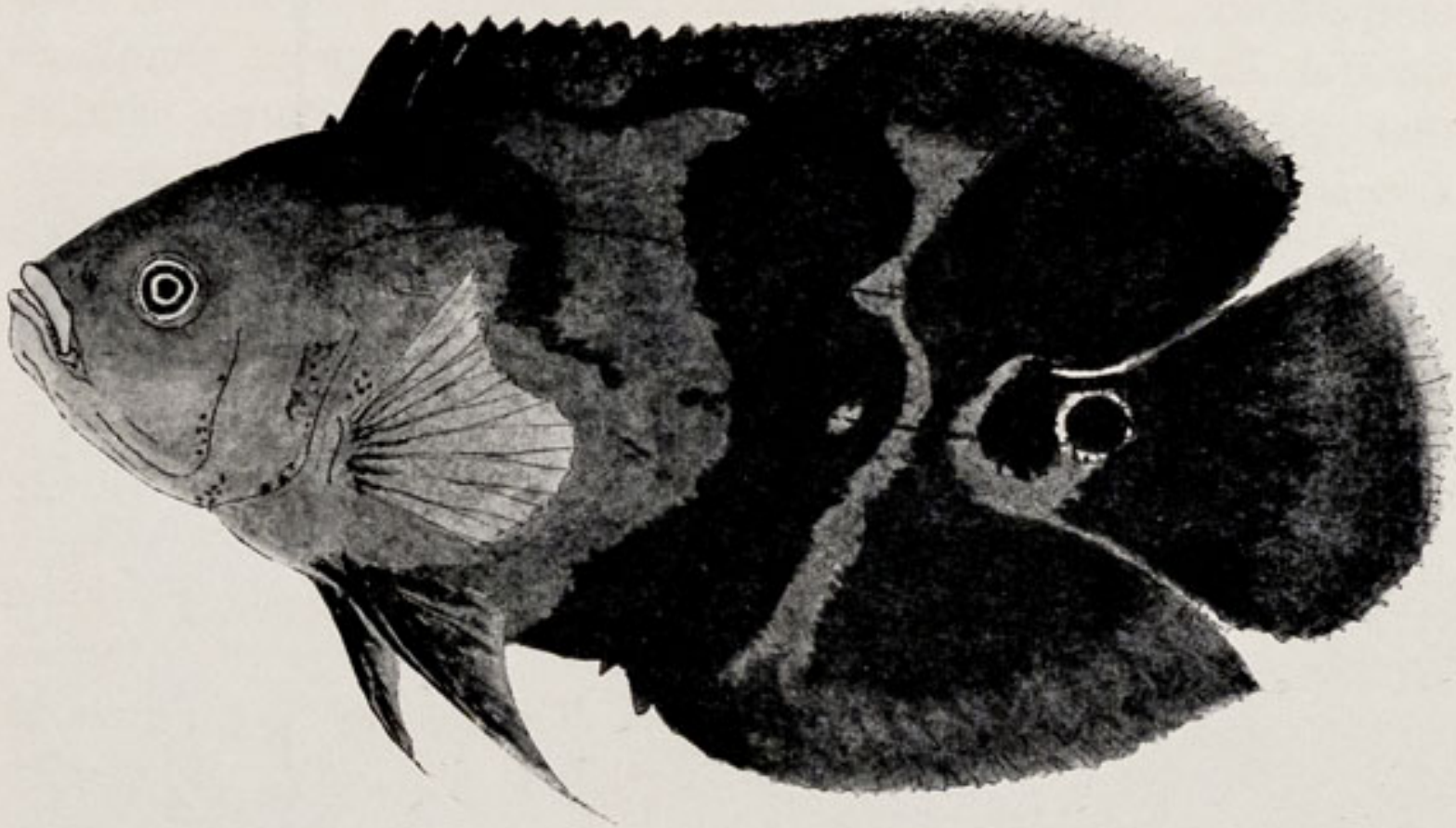
After a few more mishaps the Firemouth seemed to settle down and concentrate on the task of laying her eggs in neat rows all over the surface of the rock. The male Zebra Cichlid was observed running up and down over the eggs, apparently fertilizing them, although we could not be certain about this because, as it turned out, the majority of the eggs were eaten during the following night. Next morning there were some twelve eggs left and the female Firemouth was still guarding them, although the male Zebra Cichlid had apparently lost all interest in the brood.

The eggs remained in a perfectly normal state all the next day and no fungus was observed that evening. Unfortunately, after a close examination of the rock on the third morning, we were forced to agree that the remaining twelve eggs had been eaten. It would have been nothing short of a miracle had the parents reared the young, assuming that the eggs were fertile in the first place. It has at least proved that two fish so totally dissimilar in appearance, although belonging to the same family will, if they are stimulated by each other's characteristics, prepare a spawning site and lay eggs there.

As the hobbyist is aware, the majority of Cichlids will display to any member of the same family, even though it may not be of the same species. This usually takes the form of an aggression display, during which the fish may also pick up mouthful of gravel, as if to clear a spawning site. At this point the display invariably ends. Now that we have a compatible pair of Cichlids, it will be interesting to put them together from time to time. Eventually we may be successful in obtaining some very interesting hybrids.

Various other fish have also been spawning during the past few months, including Australian Rainbow, *Barbus arulius*, Ticto Barbs and a pair of Kribensis Dwarf Cichlids. The Kribensis we are particularly pleased with as we have waited almost six months for this particular pair to spawn. We are hoping that this spawning will present us with some really superb youngsters.

The male was one of our own youngsters produced in the Aquarium late last year, when twelve of the best and most colourful out of a batch of fifty-six individuals were kept for breeding purposes. After several months of searching, we obtained a very colourful wild caught female and it is these two adults which have just spawned. Eventually the youngsters, if any, will be split up, some to be bred back to their parents, others to be mated with the remaining eleven mature Kribensis on exhibition. It is only by careful selection for colour and the occasional introduction of desirable wild specimens. that we will establish a stable breeding stock of brilliantly coloured fish.



ASTRONOTUS OCELLATUS

M. D. Murphy

In the August issue of "Zoo News" we recorded the arrival of four young Turtles from the Ascension Isles. Readers may be interested to learn that they are at present doing very well—having increased their size at a phenomenal rate until they are now almost treble the weight recorded on arrival. We are now able to identify their species more accurately and believe them to be Green or Edible Turtles, *Chelonia mydas*.

SUNBIRDS

Amongst the birds at liberty in the Tropical House are four species of Sunbird. These are all doing extremely well—the humidity, temperature and dense tropical vegetation suiting them admirably.

Sunbirds are to be found over a wide area of Africa and South East Asia. A few species extend to the Pacific Islands and one to Northern Australia. All the Sunbirds in the Tropical House are African in origin. The Tacazzi, *Nectarinia tacazze*, from East Africa is especially common in the Abyssinian Highlands, where it is found at quite high altitudes and is able to withstand cold

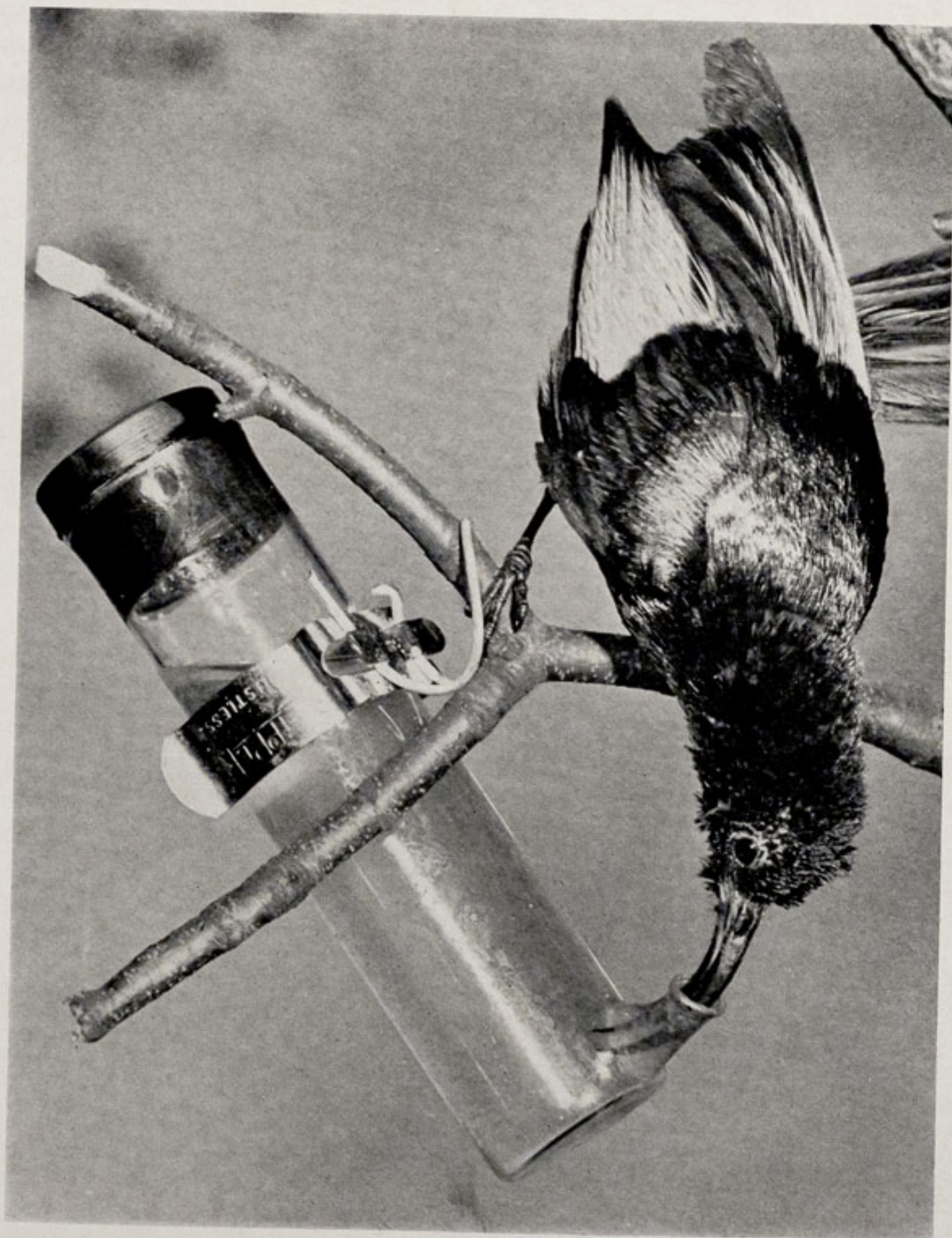
temperatures. The Scarlet-chested, *Chalcomitris senegalensis*, from Central, East and South Africa is common throughout almost all that area and is even found in gardens. The Purple-banded, *Cinnyris bifasciatus*, from East and South East Africa, frequents the larger trees of the savannahs and open areas, including those near the coast. The Yellow-winged, *Nectarinia reichenowi*, a species with a scythe-shaped beak, inhabits East Africa.

Sunbirds are similar in many respects to the American Hummingbirds, but the two groups are in no way related. Although very strong on the wing, Sunbirds are no match for the Hummingbirds in their flying skill. Occasionally they will hover whilst collecting nectar from a plant but usually they perch to feed. If the flower is a large one they often pierce it at the base in order to collect the nectar. The Sunbird's tongue is unique, in that it forms a tube which is divided into two or, in a few cases, three at the tip.

Food does not consist entirely of nectar — large numbers of small flying insects are taken, especially when there are young to feed. The Sunbirds in the Zoo are given a specially prepared nectar mixture which is put into feeding bottles hung at intervals through the Tropical House. Our Sunbirds also find nectar amidst the profuse plant life and can be seen chasing the small insects which they are so adept at catching.

In the wild state Sunbirds sometimes gather together when feeding on a particular patch of flowers, but at other times, the males especially, tend to be rather pugnacious and will defend their breeding ground as well as their nesting territories. In a building the size of the Tropical House, individual birds are able to find a territory of their own, but if kept in close confinement fighting often ensues. In the Tropical House the territories of our Sunbirds are well marked. The Tacazzi seem to be the most pugnacious species and occupy the premier position amidst the thickest flowering vegetation.

It is only in recent years that Sunbirds have been bred in captivity. Their nests are rather unusual, being purse-like, built mainly of plant fibres and seldom more than ten feet above ground



YELLOW-WINGED SUNBIRD

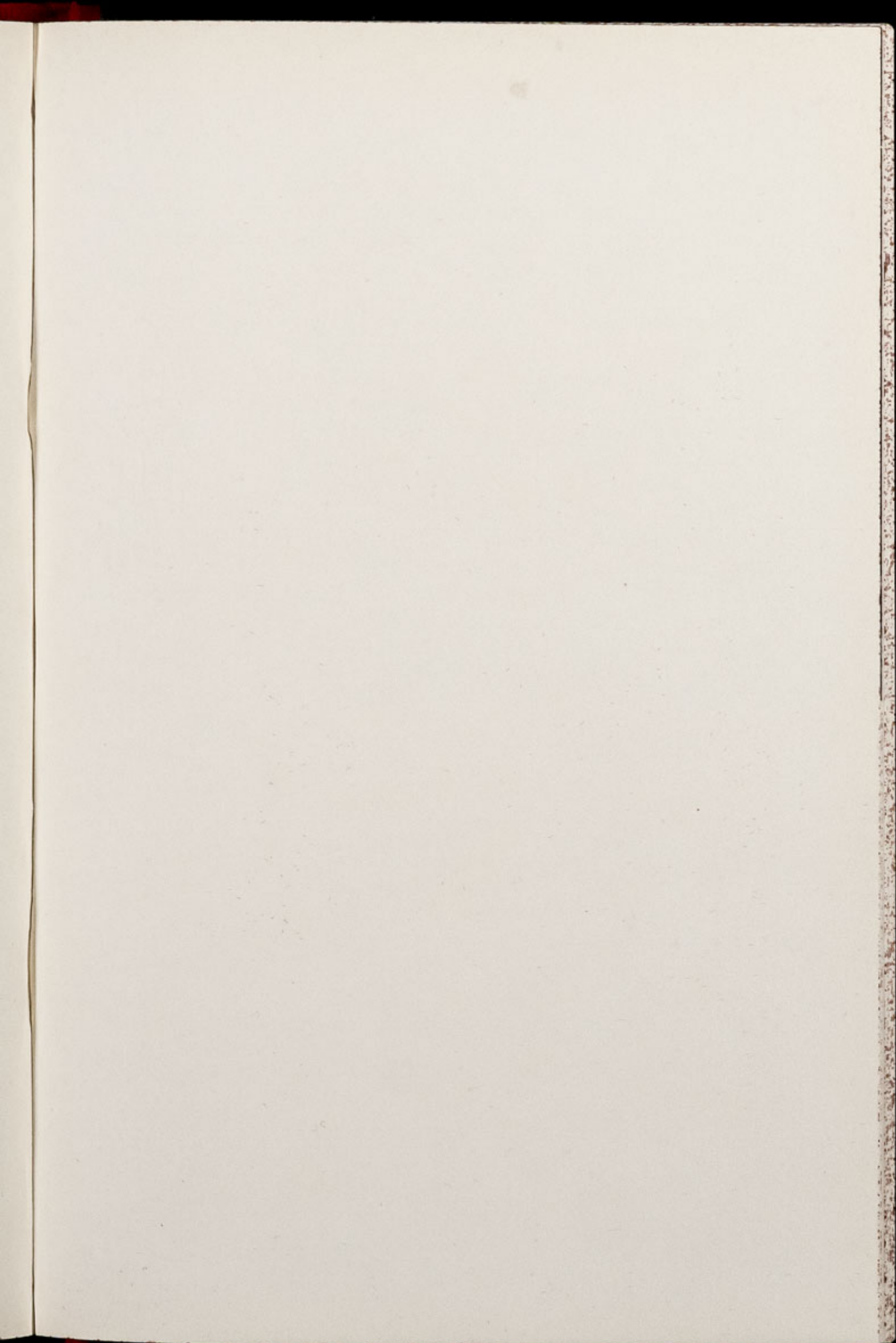
J. Gwyn Jones

level. The eggs vary in colour from species to species but most have a pale ground colour, heavily blotched or mottled. The number of eggs laid also varies. The usual number is two but some species lay three and others only one.

In the wild the usual clutch of the Tacazzi Sunbird is one, but they are known to lay several times in a season. Tacazzis which recently nested in captivity laid three eggs in the same nest and these took fifteen days to hatch. The young ones were reared and left the nest twenty days after hatching.

We are hopeful of breeding Sunbirds in the Tropical House now that the vegetation is growing so rapidly. All species seem to be ideally suited to a free flight building, especially the larger Tacazzi and Yellow-winged Sunbirds, which are able to get sufficient exercise and look far healthier than those kept in small enclosures.





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