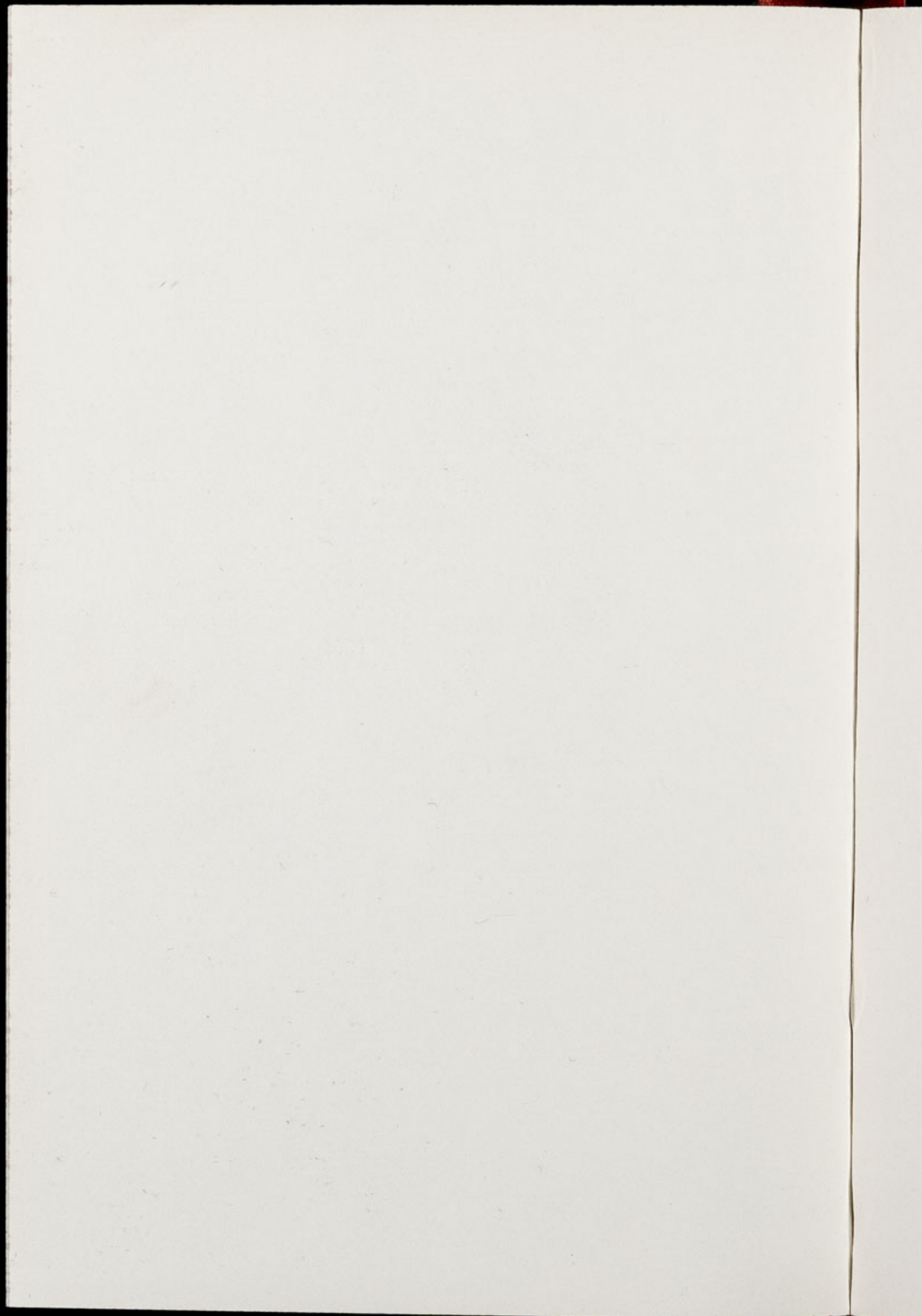


**CHESTER ZOO NEWS**  
***AND GUIDE***

October 1972

Price 6p



**The North of England Zoological Society**  
ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER

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**COVER:** *Grevy Zebra.*

*By courtesy of K. W. Green. A.R.P.S.*

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**ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION — NINETY-FIVE PENCE POSTAGE PAID**  
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### ARRIVALS AND BIRTHS

We are pleased to report that the following were bred recently:

- 6 Coypus (*Myocastor coypus*)
- 2 Ground Squirrels (*Eutamias sibiricus*)
- 1 Alpaca (*Lama pacos*)
- 1 Arabian Gazelle (*Gazella arabica*)

Though this is by no means the first time the Coypus have bred at the Zoo, there have been no young for a few years. Some of the litter can be seen in the photograph on the right. They were produced by a pair acquired in February of this year and all are accommodated in enclosure No. 31.

Indigenous to South America, the Coypu is a large rodent which has been introduced accidentally into this country. Early this century, when the demand for its fur, known as nutria, had brought the Coypu population dangerously low, numbers were shipped to other countries where fur farms were established. Numerous descendants from individuals which escaped from such farms in East Anglia now live wild there. As the Coypus frequent marshes and the banks of rivers in their natural range, the East Anglian countryside suits them admirably. Furthermore, in Britain they have few enemies and so their numbers have multiplied rapidly.

Being semi-aquatic the Coypu possesses webbed hind feet. Its front paws bear strong claws for digging and are used also for manipulating food, etc. The young adapt quickly to swimming and as the female's nipples are positioned at the sides of her body, they can suckle in the water. On land the Coypus live in burrows and in their enclosure at the Zoo they have created a network of tunnels. The gestation period is in the region of four to four-and-a-half months with up to nine young in each litter.

The baby Alpaca in enclosure No. 100 is totally white and stands out well against its black and brown parents. However,



YOUNG COYPUS (*Myocastor coypus*)

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

Alpacas occur in a variety of colours and the baby is not an albino. Last year two Alpacas were born which are now well grown and rather woolly.

The beautiful little Arabian Gazelle fawn is the third born this year and is accommodated with its mother, a female named Thamooda, in one of the paddocks marked No. 87. Thamooda was herself bred here in April 1967 but was deserted by her mother, Hindi, and hand-reared by one of the keepers. Her first fawn was produced in 1969.

This month's new arrivals include an uncommon species of African guenon, a Preuss's Monkey (*Cercopithecus preussi*). The specimen is a female and may be seen in the Monkey House. In appearance it is not unlike the Sykes and Moloney's Guenons with which it is closely related. The Preuss's Monkey originates from a restricted range in the Cameroon Mountains and on the island of Fernando Po in West Africa.

### GENERAL NEWS

From enclosures No. 100 and 101 the Llamas and Zebroids have been transferred to accommodation in other parts of the Zoo in preparation for the work of converting these paddocks to the aha principle which will commence shortly. However the Alpacas will not be moved until their baby is a little older. Details of the new enclosures and of the indoor quarters which are planned will be published in a later issue.

All the Lions in enclosure No. 91 are now together. The July litter of two cubs and their mother were introduced successfully to the male, Kim and the other Lioness with her two cubs born in May. Despite the difference in size the cubs play together and rest in a tangled heap, one of the larger cubs often lying on top of a smaller one though obviously with no ill effects. The Lionesses indulge and scold them all impartially and Kim is a tolerant, if somewhat tried, father. The two elder cubs were vaccinated recently, at which time they were both sexed as males.

### BIRD NOTES

The following birds have been bred at the Zoo during the past month:

- 1 Rufous-sided Crake (*Laterallus melanophaius*)
- 2 Grand Eclectus Parrots (*Lorius roratus*)
- 2 Little Masked Weavers (*Ploceus luteolus*)
- 2 Sundervall's Waxbills (*Estrilda rhodopyga*)
- 1 Yellow-breasted Bunting (*Emberiza aureola*)
- 1 Yellow Grosbeak (*Pheuticus chrysopeplus*)
- 1 Virginian Cardinal (*Richmondea cardinalis*)
- 1 Violet-backed Starling (*Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*)

The pair of Rufous-sided Crakes have been resident in the collection since March 1970 and were accommodated initially in the aviary for soft billed birds in the Parrot House. Shortly after her arrival, the female was observed carrying nesting materials but that year there were no further developments.

Earlier this year the Crakes were transferred to a spacious outdoor aviary adjoining the Temperate Bird House, No. 54. In this aviary the vegetation was allowed to grow unchecked and soon the grass reached a sufficient height to enable the Crakes to make tunnels through it. Though this created an ideal habitat for the birds, any detailed observations were very difficult.

The first indication that the Crakes might have young was when one bird was seen carrying a mealworm back into the undergrowth. Mealworms are provided in small quantities several times a day and are scattered on the ground so that the birds have to hunt for them themselves. For weeks, though the feeding continued, no more than two birds were ever seen at one time. Then one morning the Curator was thrilled to discover three Rufous-sided Crakes near the feeding dish. The chick is similar to the parents, being reddish-brown on the

head, sides and back, white on the breast and black and white striped on the underparts. This species is found in South America and has been bred in Great Britain only once or twice before.

The Grand Eclectus Parrots, on show in the Parrot House, have bred for a third consecutive year. However this is the first time they have produced two chicks, both of which are males. The closely related Red-sided Eclectus Parrots have also bred well here and at the moment have young in the nest.

It is quite possible that the Yellow Grosbeak is a first breeding in this country. The adults arrived in April and soon adapted to their long planted aviary.

These little birds are found in the foothills and highlands of western Mexico. They measure about eight inches in length and have large thick bills. Over most of his body the male has yellow plumage but his wings, scapulars and tail are black with patches of white. The female, though similar, is duller and streaked with greyish-brown. At the present time the chick resembles the hen.

The Violet-backed or Amethystine Starling has been bred in Great Britain before but only occasionally. Both the cock and hen, though their plumage is entirely different, are beautiful birds. They are so different in fact that for many years they were thought to be separate species. The male can be seen in the photograph on the right but unfortunately this does not do justice to the magnificent glossy purple hues on his back and throat, the underside being pure white and the ring around the eye bright yellow. Both the hen and chick have mottled brown plumage on the back and head and white streaked with brown on the underside.

The Violet-backed Starling is found in Africa from Senegal east



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

MALE VIOLET-BACKED STARLING (*Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*)

# CHESTER ZOO

THE NORTH OF ENGLAND  
ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY  
ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS



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

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. Zebra Enclosure
96. MONKEY HOUSE
97. Waterfowl Enclosure
98. Wallabies and Waterfowl
99. Cranes and Waterfowl
100. Llamas and Alpacas

101. Zebroids
102. Bison Paddock
103. Pere David's Deer Paddock
104. Eland and Marmots
105. RHINO HOUSE
106. TOILETS
107. Mpila Snack Bar and Kiosk
108. Antelope Enclosure
109. Antelope Enclosure

Animals may be moved from time to time

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

to Abyssinia and western Arabia, and south to the Transvaal. Within this range three subspecies are recognised. These birds prefer forest and woodland tracts, seeking out trees which are in fruit. They also eat various insects. At the end of the breeding season the females and juveniles congregate in separate flocks from the males and this was another factor which led to the belief that they belonged to different species. The nests are built in tree holes and lined with leaves and other plant material. The eggs, up to four in a clutch, are pale greenish blue with scattered reddish brown spots and purplish hues at the broader end.

At the Zoo the Violet-backed Starlings built two nests, the first in a horizontal log suspended near the top of the aviary. A chick was hatched but, following a night of torrential rain and high winds, was found dead on the ground. Work on a second nest commenced almost immediately and this time it was situated in an upright log with the entrance hole some seven feet from the ground. From the noise emanating from the nest it seemed possible that there were two chicks at least. However only one very large, healthy youngster emerged. The photograph on the right was taken soon after it had left the nest.

Among the new arrivals in the Bird Section are two juvenile Painted Storks (*Ibis leucocephalus*) which for the time being are accommodated in the Temperate Bird House. At the moment their plumage is mainly pale brown with a pale yellowish bill and bare patches on the face. The adult Painted Stork is a very striking bird with a basically white body, black band across the breast, bars of greenish-black on the wings and a similarly coloured tail. There is a patch of rose pink near the tail, while the bill and bare skin on the face become bright yellow. The bill itself is long, thick and curves downward at the tip. Painted Storks are usually about three and a half feet long.



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

VIOLET-BACKED STARLING CHICK (*Cinnyricinclus leucogaster*)

These colourful storks have a distribution from India through Nepal, Ceylon, Burma, Thailand, northern Malaya and Indo-China to S. W. China. They frequent marshes, lagoons and flooded fields where fish and other aquatic creatures constitute the greater part of their diet. The long bills are employed in probing for food in shallow water.

The breeding season follows the monsoon when fish are in abundance, having been washed down the swollen rivers. Large numbers of Painted Storks assemble at traditional nesting sites. In company with many other birds, including Herons and Ibis, a pair of Painted Storks build their nest of twigs in the top of a tree bordering a lagoon. Three or four eggs would be a usual clutch and both parents undertake incubation and brooding. When the chicks hatch they are fed disgorged fish. The parents stand over them with their wings spread to provide shade but as the chicks get older they begin to clamber about in the branches surrounding the nest.

In one of the Rainbow Aviaries, No. 21, we are now exhibiting two pairs of Tasmanian Native Hens (*Tribonyx mortierii*). This is a flightless bird with a stout body and heavy, yellowish green bill. The wings are short and rounded and the tail, which is black, bobs up and down in the manner of the Weka Rails. The body colouration is light brown above and greyish below and the iris is red. The male measures about twenty inches long and the female is slightly smaller.

This species is found only in Tasmania and is the island form of the Black-tailed Water Hen present on the Australian mainland. Through lack of competition the Tasmanian Native Hen has lost the power of flight and become a larger and stockier bird than its Australian counterpart. Breeding occurs during the Tasmanian spring, from September to November, with from six to nine eggs in a clutch. These are stone coloured and speckled with brown. The nest itself is a tussock of grass trampled down by the birds and lined with reeds. It is usually situated near water.

Finally, we have acquired a pair of very attractive Variegated Laughing Thrushes (*Trochalopteron variegatum*) which can be seen in an outer aviary of the Temperate Bird House. This species is found in India.

### REPTILE NOTES

In 1971, three out of four Leopard Gecko (*Eublepharis macularis*) eggs hatched but this year we have had total success. In the August issue we mentioned that both eggs in the first clutch had hatched. This year the baby Geckos have been provided with a more natural and varied diet embracing locusts and also spiders and other non-stinging insects which are collected regularly by the Zoo staff. The result is that the Geckos bred a few months ago are already as large as those hatched last year. This year's second clutch, again of two, emerged some four weeks after the first and the young are feeding well.

Seven hybrid snakes were also bred this month. The clutch contained nine eggs but in the two remaining eggs the baby snakes were dead. The parents were themselves hybrids, being the result of a cross between a female Chicken Snake (*Elaphe obsoleta quadrivittata*) and a male Black Rat Snake (*Elaphe obsoleta obsoleta*). In an earlier clutch of six from similar hybrid parents, five eggs hatched successfully.

A specimen of the Eastern or Common Hog-nosed Snake (*Heterodon contortrix contortrix*) was presented to the Society recently. The eastern form has a range from Massachusetts south to Florida and as far west as Texas in the south and Minnesota in the north. In fact it is the largest and most widespread of the four species of Hog-nosed Snakes.

The Hog-nosed Snakes are non-poisonous and grow to between two and three feet in length. The snout is upturned at the tip, which is the origin of the reptile's popular name. They occur in three

distinct shades — brownish, grey and blackish. Sandy habitats are preferred and these snakes hibernate through the winter, being active from March to September.

Salamanders, fish, snakes, lizards, insects, birds and mice all form part of the Hog-nosed Snake's diet but primarily it is reported to feed on toads and frogs. To aid in catching these amphibians it has long fang-like teeth but these are quite harmless.

Other names for the Hog-nosed Snake, such as Spreading Adder, are most misleading but have arisen from the snake's behaviour when trying to confuse its enemies. It is able to flatten its neck laterally to form a hood and thus resemble a Cobra. As an accompaniment to this display the snake hisses loudly and pretends it is preparing to strike. Consequently it is not surprising that these snakes are sometimes mistaken for a venomous species and are probably killed for this reason. The Hog-nosed Snake in the collection has displayed this behaviour.

If the "Cobra" ruse fails, like many species, this snake pretends to be dead, twisting its head to one side with its mouth open and tongue hanging loose. As a final touch it rolls onto its back. However even if levered onto its stomach, the "dead" snake insists on turning onto its back once again.

Hog-nosed Snakes are oviparous, the eggs being laid in soft ground from June to July and less frequently into early August. A maximum of forty may be laid at one time and incubation is in the region of one and a half to two months. The emerging baby snakes are six to eight inches long.

In one of the pools in the Tropical House, visitors can now see two young False Gavials (*Tomistoma schlegeli*). Though this species displays the long slender snout typical of the Gavials, it belongs to the Crocodile family. The two young specimens on show are rich brownish in colour, one being a little paler than the other, with

mottlings on the snout and bands along the back in a darker brown. These marking will probably become less distinct as the False Gavials mature. At the present time they are both about three feet long but eventually may reach twelve feet; the true Gavials can grow to twenty feet. The peculiar long jaws have evolved as an excellent instrument for catching fish, the staple diet of the False Gavial which is found in the marshes and rivers of Malaya, Borneo and Sumatra. Our young Gavials have healthy appetites and we are also pleased to report that they are believed to be a true pair.

Another recent arrival is a young Bearded Lizard (*Amphibolurus barbatus*). A native of Australia, it is also known as the Statue Lizard from its habit of sitting motionless on fence posts and other promontories. In its vivarium the Lizard spends long periods immobile on top of a branch but when offered food in the form of spiders, etc., it soon displays that it is also very agile. In the wild state the Bearded Lizard eats mainly insects which it catches with its long tongue. Spiders are reported to be its particular favourite, which is borne out by the specimen at the Zoo. In fact this lizard has ignored the locusts it has been offered.

When adult it may be twenty inches long but is now little over a foot from head to tail. Colouration of the species varies from bluish grey, like the recent arrival, to yellowish grey and mature males have black necks. These lizards are also able to change their body colour slightly to escape detection.

One of the most significant features of the lizard is that it has a pouch of skin at its throat which is inflated when it becomes excited. This is covered in little spines of skin which become erect when the pouch is distended and resemble a beard. To make itself even more ferocious, the Bearded Lizard opens its mouth to reveal the bright yellow interior. However, despite its pugnacious displays the species is quite harmless and easily tamed, many being kept as pets by schoolboys in Australia. The Bearded Lizard is also noted for running short distances on its hind legs.

### AQUARIUM NEWS

Autumn and the end of the busy season means a lot of work in the Aquarium, as every tank has to be stripped completely, cleaned and then reset. Since there are about eighty tanks and most of these contain large numbers of plants all of which have to be re-established, the work is painstaking.

We are pleased to report that the Common Garfish (*Xenetodon cancila*) received as young specimens earlier this year are now breeding. Initially about thirty eggs were deposited amongst the plants in the tank. These were transferred to nursery tanks but unfortunately the first fry to hatch did not live for more than a week. The problem was feeding but with the more recent hatchings this seems to have been overcome and they are taking very fine daphnia and newly-hatched brine shrimps. The fry are miniatures of their parents though this would not deter the adult Garfishes from mistaking them as food had they been left in the tank.

The Common or Freshwater Garfish has a pencil-slim body and is found in inland waters of S.E. Asia. The parent fishes measured about four inches long when they arrived but have doubled in size.

In the Marine Section there are two new specimens of Scorpion Fishes (*Pterois volitans*). These are young fishes and have whitish bodies with brown stripes. Known also as the Zebrafish and Turkeyfish, the Scorpion Fish is at the same time bizarre and beautiful, having long elegant fins and a row of poisonous spines along its back. Stings from these spines are said not to be fatal to humans but nevertheless can cause very severe pain.

Another new exhibit in the Marine Section is a Panther Fish. This species is white spotted with black and belongs to the family of Groupers. The specimen on show is very small at the present time but, as most Groupers grow to be fairly large, we anticipate that it could reach two feet in length.

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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