



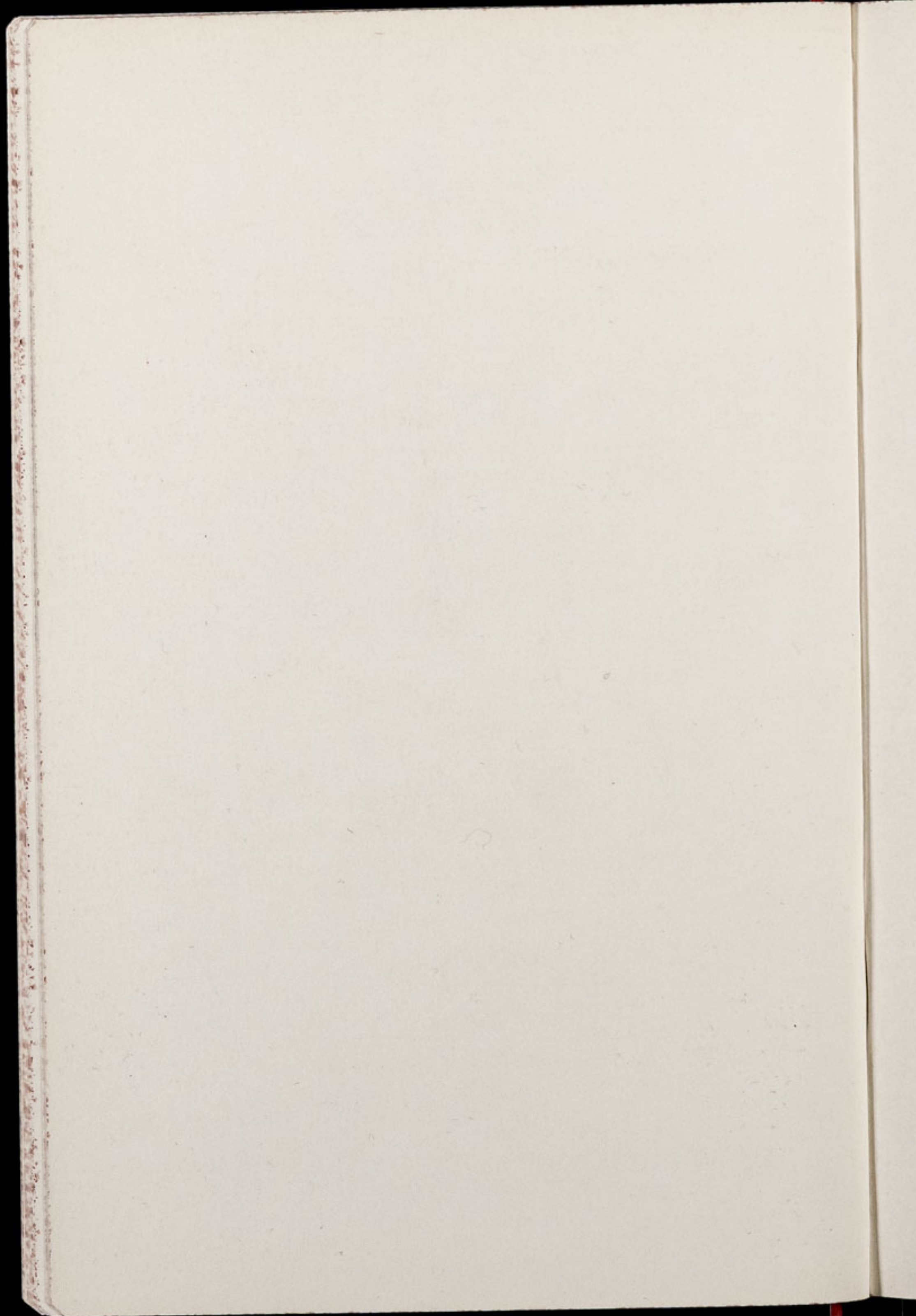
By Courtesy of K. W. Green, Esq., A.R.P.S.

Chester Zoo News

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

February, 1965

Price 1/-



Editorial

Our largest addition to the Collection for some time — all two tons of her — arrived on Friday, 12th February. At that weight readers will have guessed that the newcomer was an Elephant. "Sheba", as she is called, is approximately nine years old, stands seven feet high and is an Asiatic Elephant. When Sheba was introduced to our other Elephants (to the accompaniment of an ear-splitting chorus of welcome in which even the Hippos joined), the first thing we noticed was the exceptional length of her legs. We hope to include a photograph of Sheba in a future issue of "Zoo News".

Another new arrival to receive an enthusiastic welcome was the young male Sea Lion, released in the Sea Lion pool on the afternoon of Saturday, 13th February.

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COVER: Our Cover Picture this month features the largest of the common Iguanas exhibited in the Reptile Section of the Tropical House.

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BREEDING THE EGG-EATING SNAKE AT CHESTER ZOO

Our female Egg-eating Snake (*Dasypeltis scabra*) laid five eggs some time ago. The eggs were taken away and after an incubation period of fourteen weeks the first egg hatched on Monday, 8th February, followed by two more on Tuesday, 9th, a fourth on Thursday, 11th and the fifth and final egg hatched on Friday, 12th February.

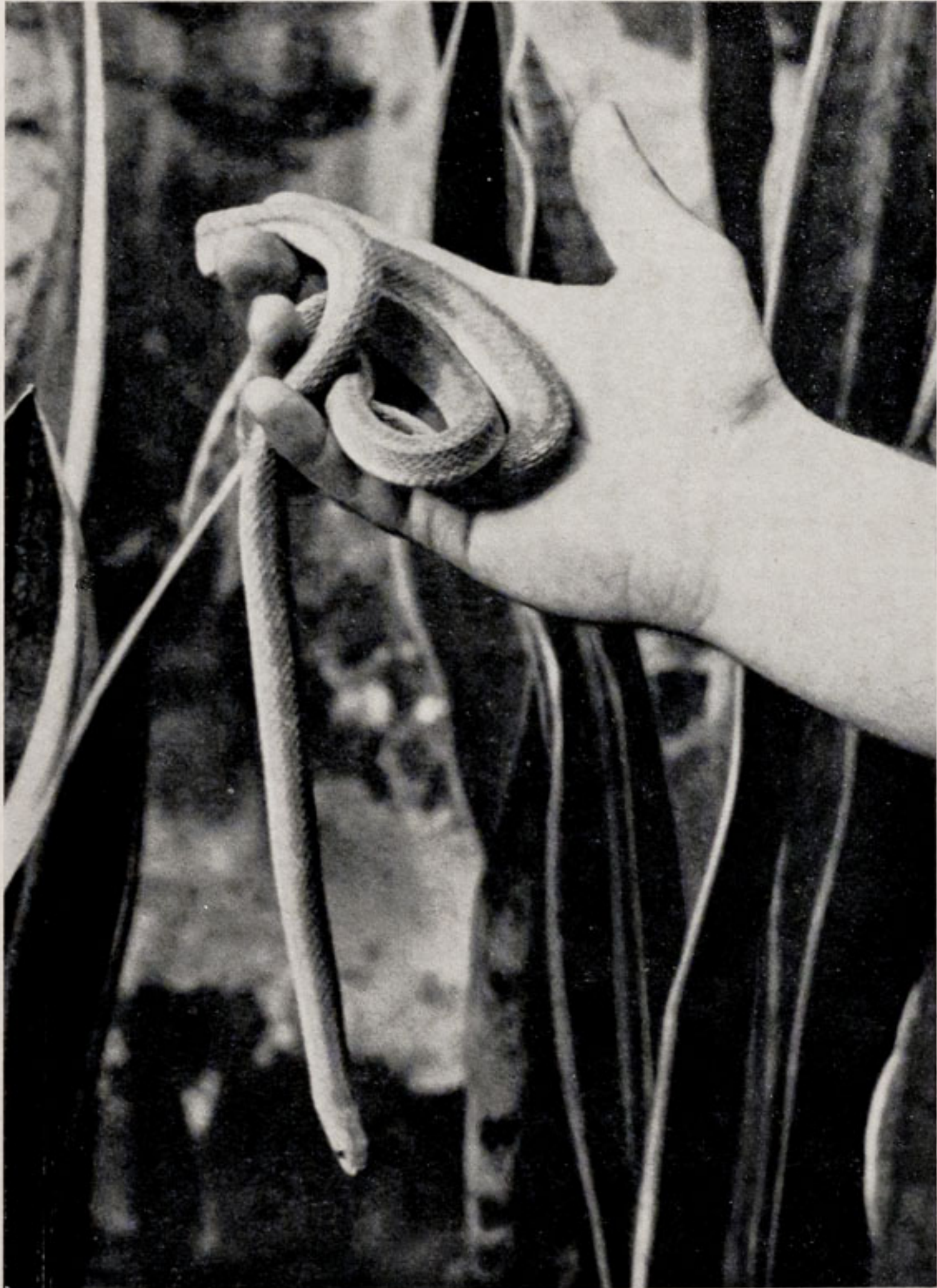
All five baby snakes are very active and we are hoping to be successful in rearing them. At the moment they are six inches long and dark, reddish-black in colour. The length of a fully grown Egg-eating Snake is approximately two feet and we have two adult specimens at Chester. One was received in June of last year and the other in August.

Egg-eating Snakes are natives of Africa and are distributed widely throughout that Continent. They are nocturnal reptiles and feed only at night. Their food in the wild is almost entirely birds eggs, those most likely to be eaten being the eggs of such small birds as Finches, Weavers and Doves. At Chester we feed Pigeon and Bantam eggs.

Egg-eaters are completely different from any other species of snake in their method of feeding. Their teeth have almost disappeared, making them quite harmless to man, but they are capable of swallowing eggs several times their own diameter. The eggs are swallowed whole and are broken by small bone-like projections in the gullet. There the inside of the egg is separated from the shell and the latter is spat out. In other species of snake, which might have a similar diet, the egg goes straight into the stomach, to be digested in the normal way.

NEW ARRIVALS

ARCTIC FOXES — Recent purchases were a lively pair of young Arctic Foxes. The newcomers, at eight months old, are in beautiful condition. Until the Cat House is completed they are living in what was the Barbary Ape Cage, opposite the Waterbus Terminus.



EGG-EATING SNAKE

J. Whitworth

The Barbary Apes have joined the Baboons and Drills in one of the new pens alongside the Monkey House.

ZOSTEROPS — Twelve Zosterops, or Indian White-eyes, were released in the Tropical House on the 9th of February. These little birds are useful as well as decorative inhabitants of the Tropical House and assist the gardening staff by ridding the plants of insect pests.

BUILDING WORK



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

WAPITI STAG

The new extensions to our range of Greenhouses overlap a corner of the Wapiti paddock. The old shelter in the paddock has been pulled down and a new cedar-wood building erected in its place. This is a much more attractive shelter than the old one, which was sadly in need of repair and the Wapitis certainly seem to approve.

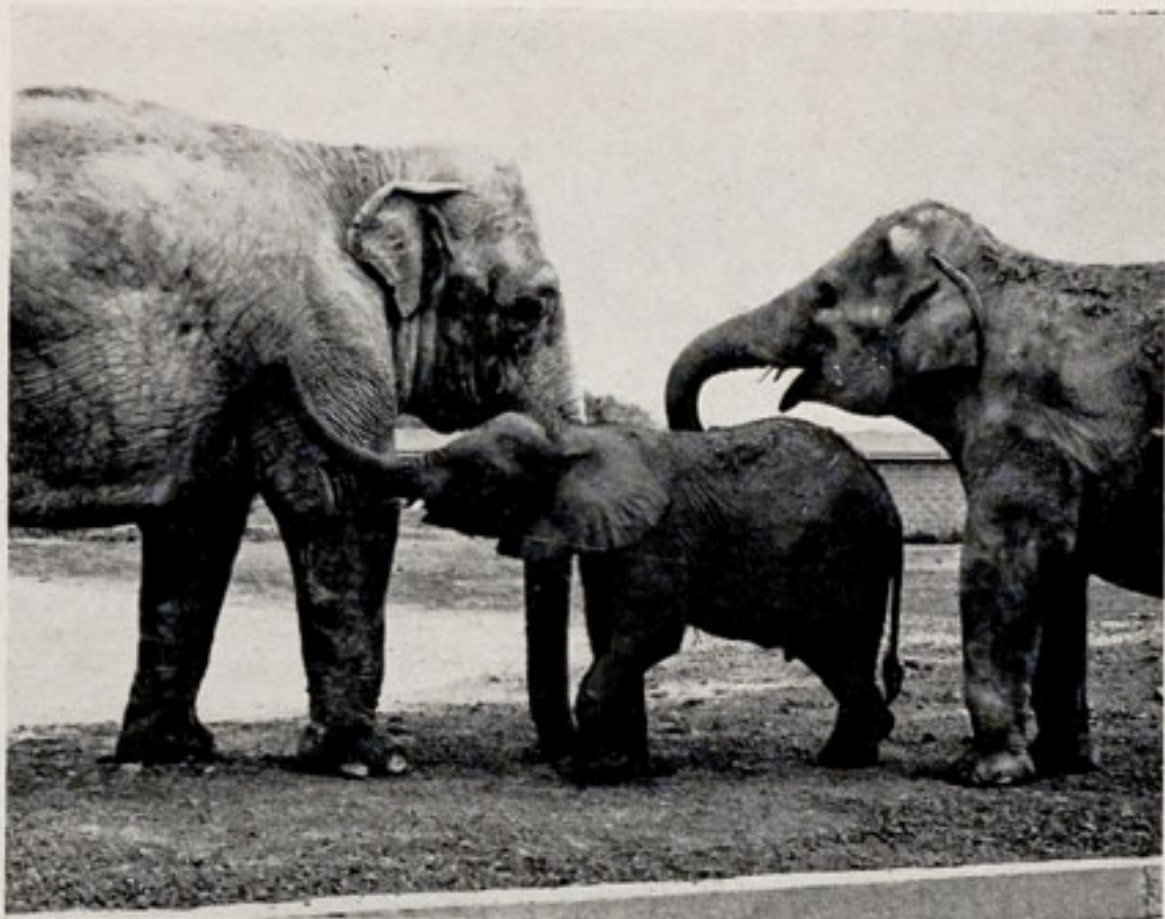
Nearing completion at the present time is the much needed new staff canteen. It is a large, airy building, tastefully decorated inside and finished with cedarwood on the outside.

NEW AVIARIES PLANNED

Another development scheduled to take place fairly soon will be the provision of a number of aviaries for the accommodation of members of our Parrot family, such as Macaws and Cockatoos. These birds have wrought havoc with their existing cages, but we cannot grumble as they have now been resident in the Parrot House for approximately twenty years.

**'JUMBOLINO'
GETS A
NEW NAME**

"BARBAR",
"BUBBLES"
AND "JUDY",



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

The Keeping Staff in our Pachyderm House found "Jumbolino" rather a mouthful, so our little African Bull Elephant is now more often called "Bubbles". Just why Bubbles was chosen remains a mystery, but it certainly suits his effervescent personality.

PROGRESS REPORT ON THE NEW CAT HOUSE

Half of the new Cat House, which has been under construction since July 1964, is now completed and ready to receive the animals. The building is self-contained and, apart from having a heating installation to provide warmth, it also incorporates a cold room in which to keep meat rations for the animals.

Each compartment of the house has the lower half fronted with sandstone and visitors will be able to view the animals through armour-plated glass windows. The area of the front above the glass (and the entire roof), is covered with strong weldmesh netting. As soon as our Pumas, Leopards and Hyaenas have been transferred to their new accommodation, the old cages will be pulled down and work can go ahead on the new Zoo shop.

SOAY SHEEP



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

The Patas Monkey on the island by the Waterbus Terminus has been transferred to the Monkey House and our flock of Soay Sheep have now been released there. Soay Sheep are not particularly spectacular exhibits, but they look rather well in their new home and will also crop the grass on the island to a more respectable length. At present there are nine sheep, but their number will soon be increased when this years lambs begin arriving in the next few weeks.

MONKEY BUSINESS

Until recently "Peter", our young Guinea Baboon and "Paula", an Olive Baboon lived quite amicably together in one of the cages in the Monkey House. However, in recent weeks Peter had begun to bully his more placid mate and we decided to give them both a change of company. Peter was reunited with "Katy", (Gelada



"KATY"

Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

Baboon), with whom he had shared a cage before the advent of Paula, whilst the latter was taken to join "Squeaker" and "Matilda", the young Barbary Ape and Yellow Baboon respectively. Now, if readers are not thoroughly confused by all this "swapping around" they will be pleased to learn that all five monkeys have settled down happily with their new companions.

CROCODILE AND ALLIGATORS



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

ALLIGATOR POOL
PICTURED IN SEPTEMBER 1964

birds flying near their enclosure, but also clamber out of their pool to receive their twice-weekly rations — which are quickly snapped up and swallowed down. The Crocodile and Alligators have never looked so well or grown so rapidly and obviously appreciate their tropical environment.

Since being moved into the Tropical House there has been an amazing difference in the Crocodile and Alligators' attitude to food. Previously they were content to take their time over anything thrown to them, but showed no special interest in food. Now, not only do they keep a hungry eye on any

"GORGEOUS" STOLEN

Regular visitors to Chester Zoo will be shocked and saddened to learn that "Gorgeous", the Roseate Cockatoo, is no longer with us. Gorgeous was quite the friendliest character in the Bird Section and came to Chester Zoo as long ago as June 1952. Unbelievable as it may seem Gorgeous was stolen on the afternoon of Monday, 8th February. The culprit or culprits had simply wrenched away the netting from the front of the cage, taken the Cockatoo and walked out of the Zoo with him.

Naturally we are all very distressed about this senseless theft and can only hope that the guilty person knows something about Cockatoos and will look after Gorgeous properly. It would be too much to hope that the thief's conscience troubles him sufficiently to return the little Cockatoo.

MR. MOTTERSHEAD'S IMPRESSION OF THE TROPICAL HOUSE AFTER FOUR MONTHS ABSENCE

Upon my return to Chester it was with considerable satisfaction that I observed the remarkable growth in our Tropical House — despite the autumn and winter weather. I had expected to see some change, but nothing like the growth which had taken place during my absence. What really delighted me was to see the obvious well-being of the birds liberated during the summer.

Since the Tropical House was an entirely new venture we expected many snags and pitfalls, some of which have already been encountered and overcome. Two major considerations were firstly, we did not know how our heating system would behave and secondly, we had to sort out the birds into two groups — those which would thrive in a tropical atmosphere and those which would not.

I am happy to say that the cost of heating the House will work out far less than expected and, according to all reports, at no time has the temperature dropped below 58°F., even when a temperature of 11°F. was recorded out of doors.

Regarding the birds — a number of losses were reported to me during my absence and I expected to find a very depleted stock, but this was far from the case. There are just as many birds as ever in the Tropical House and there is no doubt that many varieties have bred successfully and reared their young.

It was also to be expected that certain varieties of birds would not live happily with others. We realised from the start that some of the Hummingbirds and Sunbirds were particularly pugnacious, but as the vegetation grew and became more dense, we hoped these little birds would select their own territories and more or less remain there. This has in fact happened and we now have no further qualms about them.

Originally we introduced one male and two female Kiskadees into the House and they did well. However, we were horrified by their recent behaviour when they were discovered pulling nest after nest of other birds to pieces and, in some cases, throwing out eggs. Obviously we had to put a stop to this and decided to catch up the Kiskadees.

Of course the next problem was how to do this — as in the vast area of the Tropical House it would be impossible even to contemplate netting them. While we were discussing the problem Roger Ainsley (our Head Reptile Keeper in the Tropical House) mentioned that the Kiskadees often flew down into the passage behind the reptile cages, to steal from a bowl of small fish kept there for feeding purposes. Roger thought he would be able to catch the birds during one of their raids and this proved to be the case. He put down a bowl of fish and emptied a reptile cage at the end of the passage. When the birds flew down Roger went into one end of the passage and the Kiskadees immediately flew to the other, straight into the empty cage. It was then a simple matter to catch the birds and place them in an aviary inside the House.

Their object in robbing nests was to obtain building materials for their own use, so we are hoping that when the Kiskadees settle in their aviary, they will start building again. We will, of course, keep them well supplied with nesting material.

The various species of Touraco flying free in the House look extremely well and we are hoping that some of them will breed this year. A pair of Nicobar Pigeons have been transferred from the long flight in the Bird House and we hope that these too will settle down and breed in the Tropical House.

Of course not all birds can thrive in this tropical atmosphere. Our Cock of the Rock had been living summer and winter in a compartment of the Bird House provided with an outdoor flight. He simply could not acclimatise himself to the humidity in the Tropical House and, therefore, had to be returned to his old home. The Nicobar Pigeons have come from a similar environment, so their health will be watched carefully. If they show any signs of distress they will be caught up and rehoused elsewhere.



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

Since St. Valentine's Day fell on the 14th of February, we are reproducing the above picture of our Black Swans, 'snapped' at just the right moment.

The atmosphere in the Tropical House is rather pleasant. It is not in any way oppressive and the majority of the birds are thoroughly enjoying the conditions we have provided for them.

We are now eagerly awaiting the arrival of a large consignment of Birds of Paradise from New Guinea. They will be a spectacular addition to the Tropical House. In preparation for their arrival, the aviaries reserved for them are being planted out with clumps of Bamboo, most of which are already well established.

GARDENING NEWS

With the advent of the new year a very busy and interesting time approaches in the Gardens. After a more or less dormant period in the glasshouses, when all work has been of a routine nature, we now make a start on the raising of our summer bedding plants, which this month entails the potting of Geraniums and most of the grey foliage plants.

Cuttings of the named varieties of Verbena, Fuchsias, Iresines and others will be taken this month, whilst seed to be sown now includes Begonia semperflorens, Verbena, Antirrhinums, Penstemons, bedding Dahlias and Lobelia.

A start has been made with the potting of Orchids. Our Orchids are flowering very well this year, but, as is usual with Cymbidiums, there are never quite as many flower spikes on this variety of Orchid as one always hopes for.

The annual spring clean is under way with the plants in the animal houses. This involves pruning, tying, top dressing and the spraying and sponging of the plants, thereby ensuring a clean start for the year — free from pests and diseases.

In the Monkey House, the Bougainvilleas, which flowered so well last year, made sufficient growth to enable us to train them right up to the apex of the house and they should give an even better display this year. A new bed of Begonia Rex will be planted in the Monkey House this spring, also a bed of Gardenias and another of Hibiscus.

The Acacia dealbata has wintered well in the Rhino House and we intend replanting other beds with permanent plants, including

Abutilon agathea, Abutilon Golden Fleece, Buddleia madagascariensis, Cestrums in variety and Fuchsias that are suitable for this type of work.

The Tropical House entails a lot of work at this time of year and we shall carry out considerable replanting, with the introduction of several new plants which have come to hand since the initial planting last May. These include Plumarea bicolor, Ficus benjamina, Aeschyanthus javanicus and two varieties of Fern — Polypodium aureum and Nephrolepsis exalta. Particularly interesting are two plants new to our collection — the rare Datura sanguinea (the Red Trumpet Flower) and Beaumontia grandiflora (the Nepal Trumpet Flower).

We have two fine specimens of Juniperus cashmeriensis in the Monkey House, which have reached a height of approximately fifteen feet. Having grown to their limit in this position they are now being moved and replanted in the Tropical House. Beds have been made to receive them in the paddock occupied by the Giant Tortoises.

A start has been made on the landscaping of the area by the new Cat House and Monkey cages. Borders between the Baboon pens will accommodate trees and shrubs and the flower border all the way round will mean the addition of some five thousand plants to our bedding numbers.

The troughs along the top of the Cat house will be planted with different varieties of Vitus, which will eventually ramble over the entire wire roof. Vitus will also be planted between each enclosure. To complete the landscaping in this area, lawns are being laid, on which our visitors can rest or picnic.

WHITE-NOSED MONKEYS

Exhibited in a spacious cage at the far end of the Monkey House are three White-nosed Guenons. One male, "Alf", is the common White-nosed Guenon (*Cercopithecus nictitans*) from Liberia and the Congo. He has dark colouration, his coat being blackish, speckled with yellow on the back. Each hair has a grey base, banded with black and a yellow tip. The undersurface is dark grey and his face is also dark, with the exception of the pure white nose spot.

Sharing this cage are "Pixie" and "Dixie", a pair of Schmidt's White-nosed Guenons (*Cercopithecus ascanius schmidtii*) from Uganda and the Upper Congo. This species is more colourful than the previous one, having olive green upper parts and whitish colour underneath. They have the characteristic white nose spot, but the white colouration extends along the side of the face towards the ear.

There is very little known about the habits of White-nosed Guenons in the wild state, apart from the fact that they live a social life high in the trees. In body form they are very similar to other Guenons, such as Monas and Dianas and have the same lithe shape and very long tail.

When kept in captivity White-nosed Monkeys are usually very friendly and gentle but need plenty of exercise, because of their exceptional agility. Their diet at Chester Zoo is composed mainly of fruit and vegetables, with rose-hip syrup and vitamins when required.

Our three specimens came to Chester in September 1963 and were very young on arrival. They have now grown considerably and are among the most active residents of the Monkey House. When not putting on a gymnastic display for visitors, the three sit close together, tails twined in perfect harmony.

AQUARIUM NEWS

With the approach of another spring, activity in the Aquarium is beginning to gain momentum. Many trips have been made around the Zoo, in search of suitable tree roots, branches and logs, most of which will be incorporated in numerous new displays in the exhibition tanks.

Each year the displays are completely changed, the fish and plants are thinned out, rock formations altered and wood, which is on the point of crumbling after spending twelve months submerged, is removed and replaced with new material. The choice of wood for incorporation in aquatic displays has to be considered carefully, as there are several varieties which would poison the water and the fish therein. Any wood of dubious origin cannot, therefore, be used in the tanks.



THE THREE WHITE-NOSED GUENONS

Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

Not only does the use of wood have the more obvious effect of lending a natural quality to the tanks, otherwise impossible to reproduce, but it also has a more subtle effect — that is to acidify the water. This renders the water almost bacteria free and therefore most suitable for a large and varied group of highly coloured fish requiring just this quality of water.

Plants also assume a more luxuriant appearance, when grown on or around wood. Those plants showing a particular liking for such conditions are various species of *Cryptocoryne* and *Echinodorus* (the Amazon Sword Plant).

Work has been progressing satisfactorily on our Marine Fish project, although several unexpected problems called a momentary halt to our plans. It was discovered on investigating the concrete filters of the intended Marine Section, that the walls of several of them had cracked, causing the expanded metal core on which they were built to become exposed to the water. The dissolving of rust into the water, which is inevitable in these circumstances, would result in the untimely death of any unfortunate marine creature

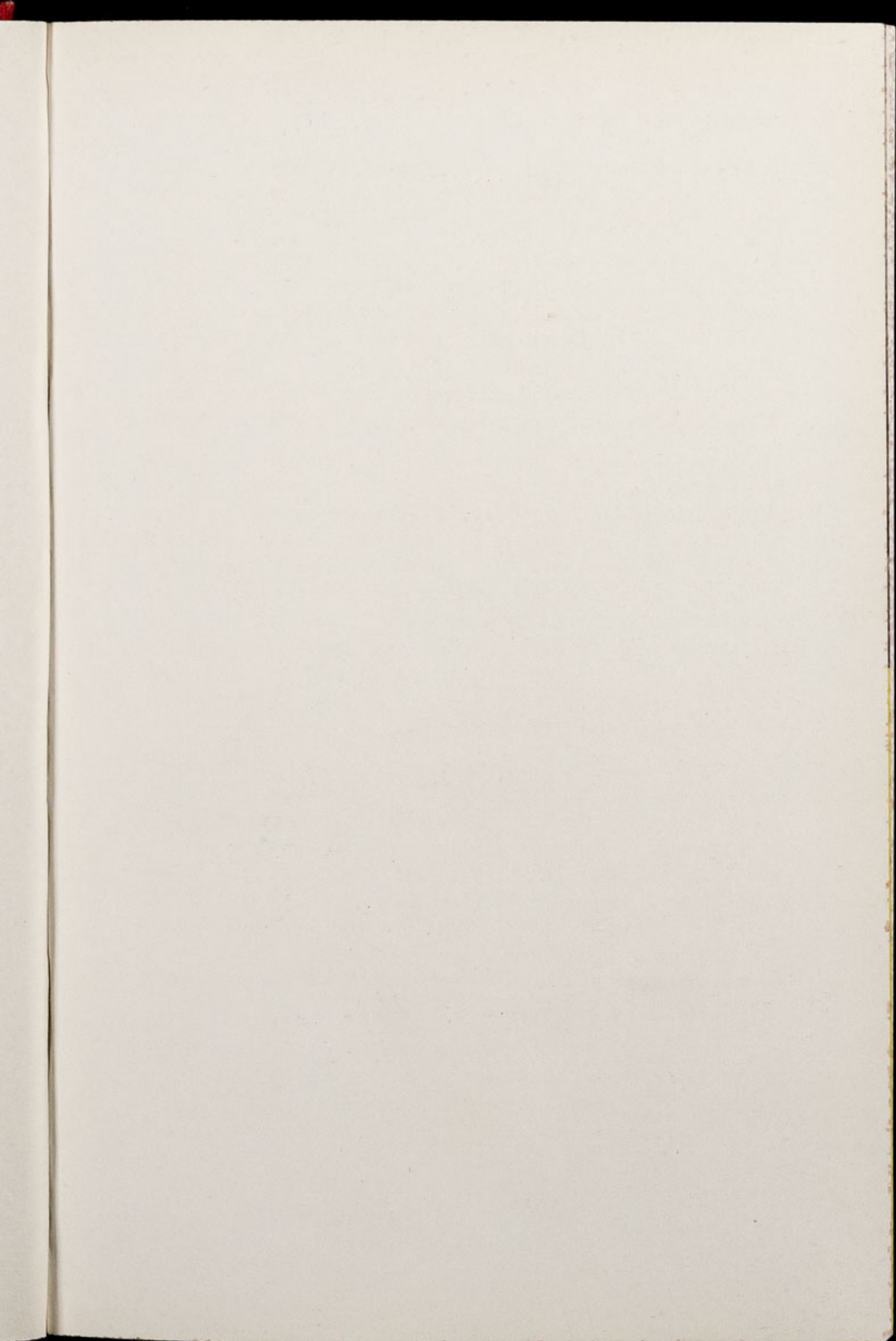
placed in the tanks. It is now intended to coat the insides of the entire row of tanks and filters with glass fibre and we are confident that, correctly done, this will overcome the problem.

The artificial concrete and rock facings for the marine tanks, which we mentioned in a previous "Zoo News", are working out very well and look most effective in the tanks. The back and sides for the first two tanks have just recently been completed. Provided that supplies of this particular type of rock do not run out, it is intended to furnish all the marine tanks in this manner. Of course the formation of the rocks in each tank will be as varied as possible.

It is at this time of year that the stocks of fish and plants come under review and their numbers increased or decreased as the situation requires. Many of the fish have spawned successfully in past months and the resulting youngsters will be sold to make room for other new species. We try to maintain as varied a collection of fish as is possible and on more than one occasion have found a reshuffle necessary, when space was a little short and some new specimen was made available to us. This also applies to the collection of plants, which it is hoped to expand this year to include such beautiful varieties as *Limnophila*, *Cabomba*, *Ceratophyllum*, *Ceratopteris* and a whole host of others.

Regular Aquarium News readers may recall the arrival of some baby Marine Turtles, which measured at that time some three inches and were presented to us by two of our visitors. They have grown at such an amazing rate since their arrival in July that they are in imminent danger of outgrowing their tank. The largest of the group is now ten inches from nose to tail and his carapace is not quite six inches across. His companions are not far behind him in length and weight. It is obvious that they will very shortly have to be moved into a much larger tank, if they are to maintain this healthy rate of growth.





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