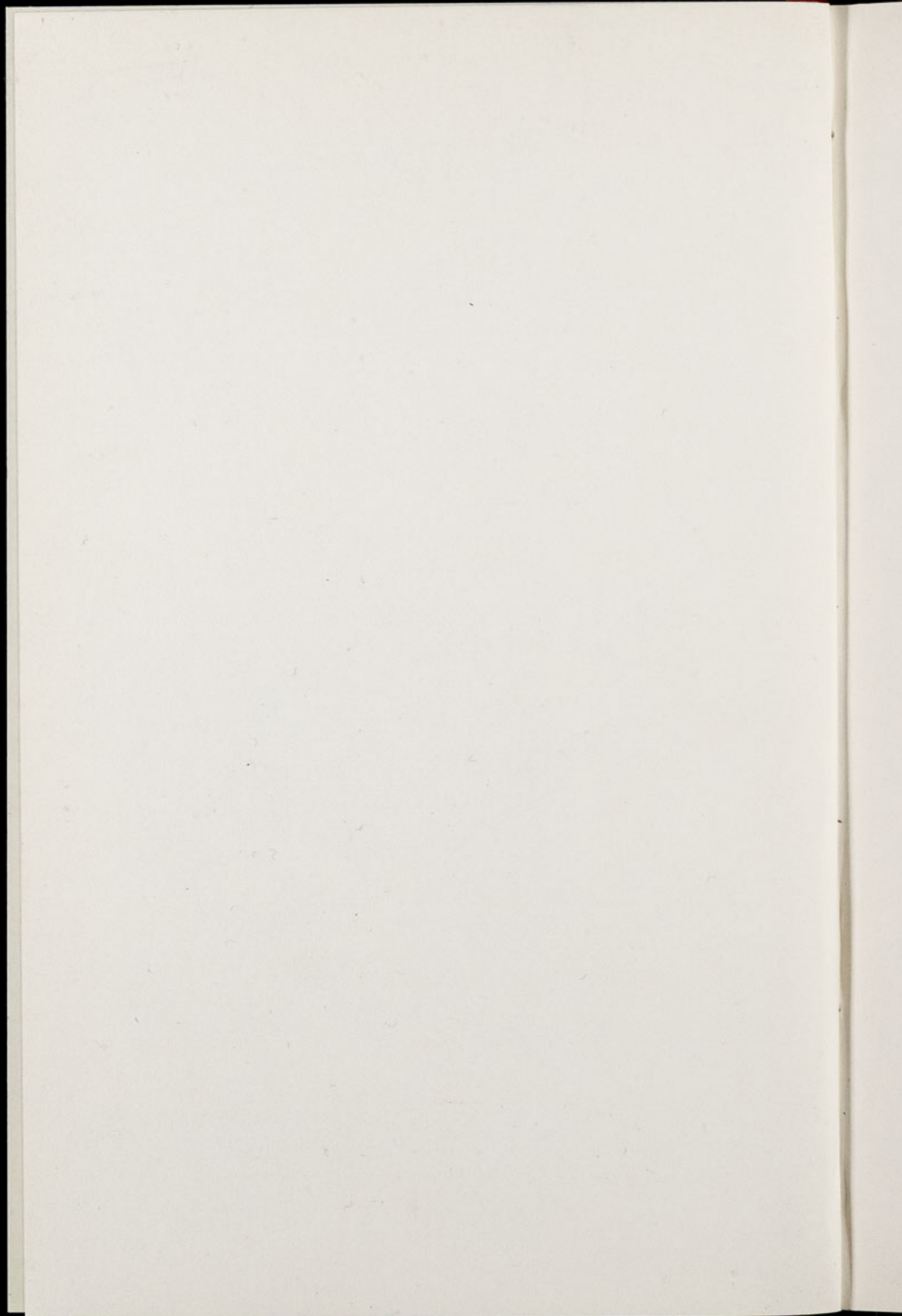




CHESTER ZOO NEWS
AND GUIDE

March 1975

Price 10p



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

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CONTENTS:

<i>page two</i>	Recent Arrivals.
<i>page three</i>	Wild Birds in the Zoo Grounds.
<i>page six</i>	Tiger Cub "Ranji".
<i>page eight/nine</i>	Zoo Plan.
<i>page eleven</i>	Gardening News.
<i>page thirteen</i>	Aquarium News.
<i>page fifteen</i>	Giant Squirrel Identified.
<i>page sixteen</i>	Subscription Increase.

ILLUSTRATIONS:

<i>page seven</i>	Female Tiger cub "Ranji" and her mother "Isis".
<i>page twelve</i>	Cymbidium in the Tropical House.

COVER: Serval (Felis serval); see page two.

By Courtesy of J. Whitworth

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RECENT ARRIVALS

A pair of Servals (*Felis serval*) and two female Northern Lynx (*Felis lynx*) were among recent arrivals at the zoo. All these animals have been accommodated in the Cat House, No. 90, where they are reported to be settling down well.

We already had four young Servals in the collection, three males and a female, all of which were bred at the zoo. We acquired an unrelated pair of Servals in order to introduce new blood into our stock.

The Serval is an African spotted cat of medium size. The body length of the adult is approximately three feet and its tail measures another twelve inches. A fully grown specimen would stand one and a half feet high at the shoulder. In appearance the Serval is a delicate creature with a small head, fairly long neck and long slender legs. This cat lives in the African bush where it is reported to stay close to water. Its prey consists mainly of small mammals and birds and the Serval is chiefly a nocturnal hunter.

The arrival of the two female Northern Lynx means that we now have four of this species in the collection. The male of the resident pair is an example of the Siberian race (*Felis lynx wranglei*) and has been at Chester Zoo since 1965. His female, a European Lynx (*Felis lynx lynx*) arrived in 1973.

In the same consignment as the Servals and the Lynx we received a female Common Rhea (*Rhea americana*). The bird has been introduced to a pair of this South American species in their large enclosure, No. 99.

Other arrivals in the bird section were a pair of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*), a female Gadwall (*Anas strepera*) and a male Tufted Duck (*Aythya fuligula*).

In February 1974 we acquired a female Nilgai (*Boselaphus tragocamelus*). For the past twelve months this animal, in company with another two females of the same species, has been undergoing

the required period of quarantine at our Birkenhead depot. Since the last report we have been able to transfer the new Nilgai to quarters at the zoo. Up to the time of writing, because of very poor weather conditions, we have been unable to release her onto the paddock. However we hope to effect this move shortly and she will then join the other four Nilgai, three males and a female, in our herd. Incidentally her two companions in quarantine were destined for another zoological establishment and we hear they have arrived safely at their new home.

WILD BIRDS IN THE ZOO GROUNDS

Chester Zoo is an ideal place to see not only foreign birds but also many of our own species. Various kinds of birds are attracted to the grounds, the reasons being probably the ample food supplies and the varying habitats which are available within the zoo boundary. The latter include parkland with mature deciduous and coniferous trees, canals and ponds with plenty of reed cover, extensive shrubberies and hedgerows, open paddocks and farmland. We thought it would be a good idea to list some of the species which the bird watcher might hope to see on a visit to Chester Zoo.

The more common garden species are of course well represented. Robin, Blackbird, Song Thrush, Starling, Wren, Blue and Great Tits and the inevitable House Sparrow would certainly be included on any list. Greenfinches, Chaffinches and Dunnocks are abundant too and along the hedgerows the bird watcher is likely to encounter Goldfinches, Linnets and Bullfinches. Coal Tits are common in the older part of the zoo, particularly in the area of the owl aviaries (No. 5) and the gardens in front of the Oakfield Restaurant. Recently there have been numerous sightings of Goldcrests in this area also. Marsh and Long-tailed Tits occur periodically.

The Pied Wagtail is another species which the bird watcher is sure to list. The most likely places to locate these birds are the Polar Bear enclosure and the Sea Lion Pool, although they are observed frequently on the lawns and in the waterfowl enclosures. The Pied Wagtails breed in the grounds and for several successive seasons a pair reared young in one of the greenhouses, constructing

the nests on a bench in between rows of potted plants. Much to the gardeners' disappointment the pair has not appeared for the past two years. Yellow and Grey Wagtails are present but in fewer numbers, although the Yellow Wagtails also nest in the zoo. There has been one sighting of a White Wagtail.

Treecreepers are regular visitors and at this time of year when the trees are still bare these little brown and white birds can be discerned more easily. Usually they are observed in the vicinity of the Oakfield Restaurant where there are numerous mature trees. Here too the patient watcher should be rewarded with the sighting of a Nuthatch. There are several Nuthatches in the grounds and last year at least one pair nested, choosing a tree in the Lion enclosure (No. 58) in which to rear their brood. Undoubtedly they selected a site which would be safe from intruders! The occasional Lesser Spotted Woodpecker has been reported and in recent months staff have observed two Green Woodpeckers near to the Rhino House (No. 112).

As regards birds of prey, Kestrels are a common sight hovering above the zoo or perched in nearby trees and during the past few years observations of Sparrowhawks have become more frequent. Clearly the Sparrowhawks are making a comeback in this area. A few Buzzards have also been recorded.

Regular visitors to the ponds and canals are the Mallard. We estimate there are approximately three hundred of these duck on the various ponds and in the spring the Mallard ducklings are a very popular (and inexpensive!) attraction for the public. The number of wild Moorhens living at Chester Zoo must be well in excess of seven hundred—over a hundred have been counted on one paddock alone. Several pairs of Coots nest here each year, as do the occasional pairs of wild Mute Swans. Herons have been seen in the waterfowl enclosures and sometimes in the long vegetation on the margins of fields. Gadwall, Shelduck, Tufted Duck, Water Rail and the Little Grebe or Dabchick have all been recorded on the ponds at various times. On occasions we are also visited by small flocks of Canada Geese but we suspect that these birds have escaped from private collections.

In 1971 we were delighted to discover that a pair of Kingfishers had nested in the vicinity of Gibbon Island (No. 40). One summer evening a few members of staff were treated to the marvellous spectacle of three immature Kingfishers being fed by their parents. The young birds were perched on a low branch which extended for a short distance above the water and the adults were darting back and forth in search of fish. However, although there are a few of these brilliant little birds about, a bird watcher would be extremely lucky to catch a glimpse of one.

Of the Warbler family, Chiffchaffs and Willow Warblers are recorded most frequently. Garden, Sedge and Reed Warblers, Whitethroats and Blackcaps pass through and the Blackcap probably breeds here also. Two years ago a Grasshopper Warbler was heard singing over a period of several days but the bird was never actually observed.

On the larger paddocks one can scarcely avoid seeing Black-headed and Herring Gulls and these are often accompanied by a few Lesser Black-backed Gulls, all taking advantage of the food provided for the zoo animals. Crows, Rooks, Jackdaws and Magpies abound and so do the Collared Doves. These attractive Doves have become so numerous during the past decade that unfortunately they are now regarded widely as pests. Wood Pigeons are another common species but these birds are not present in such large numbers as the Collared Doves. There is a good population of Mistle Thrushes in the grounds and Oystercatchers, Curlews and Lapwings, which congregate on the surrounding farmland, sometimes wander into the zoo.

About to take their leave for summer haunts are the Redwings and Field Fares which have been frequent visitors to the paddocks during the winter months. By the beginning of June there will be Swifts, Swallows and House Martins everywhere and the patient observer may be able to record one or two Sand Martins as well. The beautiful song of the Skylark is an inevitable accompaniment to a summer stroll through the grounds and sometimes in the distance a Cuckoo will disclose its presence with its distinctive call.

Some of the other species which have been recorded are Reed and Corn Buntings, Bramblings, Redpolls, Meadow and Tree Pipits, Yellowhammers and Wheatears. Pied Flycatchers pass through and each year at least one pair of Spotted Flycatchers nests in the grounds.

We think the ornithologists among our readers will agree that this is a respectable tally of species and of course there is always a chance of spotting a bird which has not been recorded in our grounds. So, next time you visit Chester Zoo, why not bring your binoculars!

TIGER CUB "RANJI"

On the right we are publishing another photograph of the six months old female Tiger cub, Ranji, and her mother, Isis. This delightful young animal featured on the cover of the February issue but we thought readers would not mind a second look at her.

Initially staff believed Ranji was male and the discovery that Isis had produced a female cub was very welcome news indeed. Hopefully in a few years' time we will be able to mate Ranji with an unrelated male and thus have two breeding Tigresses in our collection.

The successful breeding of this species in captivity is vitally important because of all members of the cat family the plight of the Tiger (*Panthera tigris*) is amongst the most desperate. Just before the last war it was estimated that over 20,000 Tigers lived in India. A recent survey placed the population at less than 2,000.

There have been three main reasons for the decline of the Tiger. The first and probably the most important has been the destruction of habitat and with it the elimination of the species on which the Tiger preys. Poaching has been the second major factor. The magnificent skins of the Tiger have fetched high prices in the affluent west, although now both the United States and the United Kingdom have banned the import of these skins. Thirdly there has



FEMALE TIGER CUB 'RANJI' WITH HER MOTHER 'ISIS'

J. Walker, Daily Mirror

TO LECTURE HALL
(Private)



CAR PARK

CAR PARK

North Entrance

C Road

Warrington
Manchester
Whitchurch
and South

FOR A COMPLETE
TOUR OF THE ZOO—
Follow Nos. 1—116
from South Entrance
or Nos. 16—116
from North Entrance
then return to
Nos. 1—14

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. Sunken Garden
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. Flamingos
44. Waterfowl Enclosure
45. Waterfowl Enclosure
46. Waterfowl Enclosure
47. Penguins
48. Sealions
49. Rock Garden
50. Polar Bears
51. Cat Enclosure
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. 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. Emus and Cranes
88. Stork Enclosures
89. Baboon Pens
90. Cat House
91. Lions and Tigers

92. Antelope and Ostrich
93. Antelope Enclosure
94. Antelope Enclosure
95. Zebras
96. Llamas
97. Waterfowl Enclosure
98. Wallabies and Waterfowl
99. Waterfowl Enclosure
100. Blackbuck
101. Wallabies
102. Animal Paddock
103. Animal Paddock
104. Animal Paddock

105. Proposed New Bear Enclosures
106. Arabian Gazelles
107. Animal Paddock
108. Bison
109. Pere David's Deer Paddock
110. Prairie Marmots, Alpacas
111. Antelope Enclosure
112. RHINOS
113. TOILETS
114. Mpila Snack Bar
115. Antelope Enclosure
116. MONKEY HOUSE

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.



been the effect of hunting. By comparison this has probably claimed fewer Tigers than either of the previous factors but to a species in a serious decline any depletion of numbers is catastrophic.

There are eight races of the Tiger and all are listed as endangered mammals in the I.U.C.N.'s Red Data Book. The Indochinese and Sumatran races have been allocated yellow sheets in this publication which denote that their status is vulnerable. The Chinese, Javan, Siberian and Caspian races are extremely rare; in the case of the Javan Tiger, the total number is probably between ten and twenty animals. The Balinese race may already be extinct. The Indian or Bengal Tiger, although seriously depleted, would seem to have the best chance of survival.

In 1947 when the peoples of India and Pakistan gained independence, the forests, which had formerly been the preserve of the princes and the British, came suddenly into common ownership. Anyone could go into the forests and kill game and many did, with the result that in numerous areas the larger mammals were wiped out. Now, thanks to the foresight and influence of the Prime Minister, Mrs. Gandhi, there is a very real effort in India to conserve not only the Tiger but many other endangered species as well.

The Indian Wild Life (Protection) Act, passed in 1972, made illegal all hunting of the Tiger and went a long way towards defeating the poachers. At the same time "Project Tiger" was launched. The purpose of this scheme, which is supported by the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and the World Wildlife Fund, is to increase the Tiger population. Under the guidance of "Project Tiger" a number of areas in the Indian sub-continent have been designated as Tiger reserves—in most cases existing sanctuaries and parks have just been enlarged. The sizes of these reserves should be sufficient to support viable populations of both Tigers and their prey species.

For the first time in many years the future of the Tiger looks a

little brighter. If a successful conservation scheme can be coupled with an efficient captive breeding programme, perhaps the Tiger will be saved from the extinction which seemed so inevitable such a short time ago.

GARDENING NEWS

Whilst on a recent expedition to Brazil and Peru, Her Grace Sally Duchess of Westminster collected some natural orchid species which she has kindly presented to Chester Zoo. As soon as the plants arrived in this country, they were dispatched directly to us and they have not been affected adversely by their long journey from South America. As with all natural orchid species which are imported, they have no live roots, a condition which is termed "dry rooted". The orchids are mostly epiphytes and in the wild state would be found growing on trees.

Although the orchids arrived in fairly good condition, over the next few months they will require special care and attention to make them really healthy plants. It will be at least a year or two before we can expect any of them to produce full flower. At the present time the orchids have been set out in boxes of sphagnum moss and placed in our mist propagator. Extra heat is available beneath the boxes and overhead there is automatic spraying.

The species of orchids which we have received include Cattlyas, Epidendrons, Eriopsis, Masdvallias, Galandras, Catasetums and Gaularthrons. There are also a few plants which have not yet been identified. Altogether this is a most interesting collection and we are looking forward to growing the orchids and seeing their first flowers.

The new plants will be growing in the greenhouses alongside our present collection of orchids and when eventually in flower they will be exhibited to visitors in one of the staged groups which are



CYMBIDIUM IN THE TROPICAL HOUSE

J. Whitworth

situated just inside the Tropical House entrance. A group of orchids has been on display in this building since before Christmas. First to flower were the hybrid cultivars of *Pathopedalums* and *Cattlyas*. At the time of writing the group contains cultivars of *Cymbidiums*, *Dendrobiums* and *Cattlyas* and some orchid species. One of the *Cymbidiums* is shown in the illustration on the left. The display of orchids will continue in the Tropical House until May.

AQUARIUM NEWS

Amongst various species acquired recently for the Aquarium were a number of Checkered Barbs (*Barbus oligolepis*). This is the first group of Checkered Barbs which has been exhibited at Chester Zoo for some years. The fishes are young specimens but when fully grown they will measure approximately two inches in length. Females of this Sumatran species are duller in appearance than the males. The latter display reddish orange fins and a bluish sheen to their bodies.

Several Lemon Tetra (*Hyphessobrycon pulchripinnis*) are new and have proved more brightly coloured specimens than those already on show. Other additions include Beacons (*Hemigrammus ocellifer*), Cardinal Tetra (*Cheirodon axelrodi*), Neon Tetra (*Hyphessobrycon innesi*), Tiger Barbs (*Barbus tetrazona*) and young Red-tailed Black Sharks (*Labeo bicolor*) and Silver Sharks (*Balantiocheilus melanopterus*). Additions to the Gourami exhibit are numbers of the Three Spot and Golden varieties (*Trichogaster trichopterus* sp.).

In another tank visitors can see examples of Albino Mollies (*Mollienesia latipinna*). Both sexes of this white variety of the popular Molly have red eyes. However the males have a distinct yellowish tinge to their bodies and there are bands of blue and red on their fins. The whiter females have plain fins.

A number of Dwarf Gouramies (*Colisa lalia*) have also been acquired since the last Aquarium report. The males of this colourful

species have deep red bodies with vertical bands of bluish green spots on their sides. Their heads are usually bright blue-green. The females are somewhat duller than the males but are still most attractive exhibits. The Dwarf Gourami originates from India and reaches an adult length of two inches.

Our Blue, Seven-coloured and Blue-faced Red varieties of Discus (*Symphysodon discus*) were joined recently by a number of young Red Discus. After a rather shaky start, these Red Discus have settled down and are feeding satisfactorily. This particular variety has not been shown in Chester's Aquarium for some time.

A Fire Eel (*Mastacembelus sp.*) was the only other arrival and this fish was presented to the collection. The Fire Eel belongs to the spiny eel family, the members of which are distributed in tropical Africa and in south and south-east Asia. We believe that Asia was the original home of the fish now in our possession. Although their basic body shape is similar, the spiny eels are not related to the true eels. The snout of the spiny eel is elongated into a mobile proboscis with which it can probe the river bottom for worms, the main constituent of its diet.

The new Fire Eel is a very colourful specimen. The ground colour of its body is dark brown but it has bright red vertical stripes along its sides. It measures approximately two feet in length which we believe is almost fully grown for this species.

At the time of writing the Fire Eel is not on show to visitors. It was placed in an exhibition tank a few days after arrival but the Aquarium keeper was not satisfied with its progress and returned it to a smaller tank at the back of the Aquarium. Here he has been maintaining a close watch on the Fire Eel's food intake and general condition.

The restocking of the Aquarium has included the purchase of a number of aquatic plants, amongst them the delicate fern-like

Cabomba and both Malayan and Amazon Swordplants. In order to give them a good start, all the plants were placed initially in a large tank with their roots in a mixture of peat and sand. As a further aid to stimulating healthy growth, a strong light was placed above them. Most of the plants have now been established in the main tanks.

Readers may recall that in an earlier Aquarium News we recorded the breeding of numerous Common X Marbled Angelfish (*Pterophyllum sp.*). Recently these young fish were placed with the adults in the exhibition tank. We are pleased to report that as a result of the large numbers of Angelfish being reared, we are able to replenish our own stocks and are therefore becoming self sufficient in this species.

Some very attractive specimens have been obtained from the mating of the Common and Marbled parents. However all the young Angelfish display the unusual enlarged dorsal fin which was mentioned in a previous issue.

Into another tank have gone several hundred White Cloud Mountain Minnows (*Tanichthys albonobes*) which were also bred here a few months ago.

GIANT SQUIRREL IDENTIFIED

In the January issue of the magazine we published a photograph of a young Giant Squirrel which had just arrived at the zoo. At that time we were unable to make a positive identification of this animal because it had not acquired its adult colouration. In the past few weeks we have ascertained that it is a Cream-coloured Giant Squirrel (*Ratufa affinis*) which comes from Malaya.

This species of Giant Squirrel attains a body length of twelve inches and has a bushy tail at least as long again. There are two

colour phases, a very pale variety and the darker form which we have acquired. The Giant Squirrel is a forest species which lives high up in the canopy of the trees and is capable of leaps of up to twenty feet. Its nest, which is a sizable structure of twigs, is also built in the top of a tree.

As might be expected, the diet of the Giant Squirrel consists mainly of nuts and fruit. When eating, the animal adopts a distinctive position—its body leaning forward over the branch and its front paws grasping the item of food. At first glance it seems inevitable that the Giant Squirrel will topple off the branch but then one realises that its weight is counterbalanced by the long furry tail. Another species of Giant Squirrel which inhabits Malaya, *Ratufa bicolor*, is slightly larger than *Ratufa affinis*.

Visitors can see the handsome Cream-coloured Giant Squirrel in one of the Small Mammal House enclosures, No. 84.

SUBSCRIPTION INCREASE

For many years we have endeavoured to keep the price of the "CHESTER ZOO NEWS" as low as possible. In fact since the publication of the first issue in September 1962, there has been only one price rise—from 5p (1/-d.) to 6p in September 1971. However we now find the magazine is running at such a loss that we are obliged to increase the price to 10p per copy.

In addition, as from 17th March, postal rates were increased to 5½p for a second class letter. Reluctantly therefore we have been compelled to increase the annual subscription to the "CHESTER ZOO NEWS" to £1.75. All existing subscriptions will be honoured until they expire.

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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