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Chester Zoo News

AND GUIDE

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

July 1970

Price 1/-

The North of England Zoological Society

ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER

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COVER: Elephants, from left to right, Barbar, Jumbolino, Nobby, Judy and Sheba.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION SEVENTEEN SHILLINGS POSTAGE PAID

TELEPHONE :: CHESTER 20106/7/8

ARRIVALS AND BIRTHS

1970 is proving a good year for breeding at Chester Zoo. In the first six months of this year we have bred Blesbok, Gnus, Jaguars, Leopards, Bears, Owls, American Bison, Agoutis, Wallabies, a Chimpanzee and several species of Monkeys and Deer, to name but a few and there is every indication that the next six months will be as eventful.

Among the latest births were those of two Fallow Deer (*Dama dama*) and a Brindled Gnu (*Connochaetes taurinus albojubatus*), the second born this year. The Fallow Deer fawns can be seen in enclosure 78 and the Gnu calf in enclosure 102.

Three Common Leopards (*Panthera pardus*) which were born at the end of May, are now being carried outside on warm days by their mother. A second litter of two cubs has only just been born and will not venture out of the den for several weeks.

London Zoo has presented us with a male Canadian Beaver (*Castor canadensis*) which has joined the resident group in their pond, No. 31 on the plan.

The Beaver is the second largest rodent after the Capybara and grows to a length of over three feet. It is fully adapted to its semi-aquatic life, having webbed hind feet and a flattened tail which acts as a rudder aiding movement through the water. Also a Beaver can stay submerged for up to 15 minutes by conserving oxygen and closing its nostrils and ears. On the hind feet there are two split claws for grooming and these are also used to comb oil through the fur. This oil is secreted by the Beaver and both waterproofs the fur and insulates the animal against the cold. The front paws are adapted for manipulating food and small objects such as twigs; they also have strong claws for digging. If a Beaver senses danger it slaps its tail on the surface of the water to warn all other Beavers in the vicinity.

They live in family groups and build large mud and branch structures known as lodges. Each lodge has a central living chamber above the water level which is reached through underwater tunnels. Air is allowed into the living chamber through a passage in the roof. The dams are built to create suitable lakes in which the Beavers can live and both the lodges and the dams are renowned as remarkable feats of engineering, but nonetheless are the result of instinct rather than intelligence. The Beavers do not build dams in our pond as it is round and the water is not moving quickly but their lodge is very easy to spot. The best time for seeing the animals is either in the early morning or evening. Their diet in the wild consists of bark from willow, aspen and other trees and at the Zoo this is supplemented by potatoes, carrots, etc.

There are two species of Beaver, the Canadian and the European (*Castor fiber*), though the differences between them are so slight that some zoologists regard them merely as races of the one species. A few hundred years ago the Beaver was widely distributed throughout Europe and was even found in the British Isles but the demand for Beaver fur and also for a substance known as castoreum led to the animal's near extinction. Small numbers managed to survive in Scandinavia and the Elbe and Rhone valleys. Protective measures were finally introduced and the population is now on the increase. Castoreum is secreted from the scent glands or "castors" of the Beaver and in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was held to be a miracle cure for a wide variety of illnesses. Subsequent research has revealed that it contains salicylic acid, a property of aspirin.

The Canadian Beaver is more numerous though its range is also much reduced. As with many of the American species the decline in numbers began with the arrival of white European settlers and reached a peak in the last century when the improved communications, firearms and demands of the fashionable circles in Europe made fur trapping a very worthwhile business. Whereas the native Indian and Eskimo trappers had hardly affected the Beaver

population for they took only adult animals, the white trappers hunted ruthlessly and the animals were decimated. Under recent protection the population has recovered and in some areas controls have to be made on the numbers. Though often regarded as pests because of their damage to trees, Beavers are also recognised as quite useful little animals in that by damming rivers they hold back vital water which irrigates large stretches of bank. In some areas Beavers are being re-introduced to the rivers for this purpose.

Another presentation to the Society was that of a male Slow Loris (*Nycticebus coucang*) which can be seen in the Nocturnal House. This species is found in Southern Asia, Java and Borneo, where it lives in the tropical rain forests, moving slowly and deliberately through the trees in search of food. It catches insects, small birds and geckos by stalking them along the branches and also eats various fruits and berries. During the day it sleeps clinging to a branch. This is possible as the blood supply to the forearms can be slowed down to enable the Slow Loris to grip for long periods without tiring. The fur of this species is in some demand as a medicine. Like spiders' webs and cotton wool it has the power of causing blood to clot and so is used as a dressing for wounds and for sores by forest peoples from Burma to Borneo.

Usually the Slow Loris produces a single baby which is carried about clinging tightly to its mother's fur. Until recently the gestation period of the Lorises was rather a mystery as even in zoos their shy habits prevented people from knowing just when they had mated. Many of the Lorises which produced young in zoos had been pregnant when they were captured. Positive observations have now established a gestation period of 193 days for the Slow Loris.

They are reputed to be quite ill-tempered animals at times, especially in captivity, and the keeper who was holding the branch



SLOW LORIS

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

while the photograph on the opposite page was taken certainly had to be very nimble-fingered to escape his teeth.

Dr. Glover of Liverpool University has presented the Society with some Cape Hyraxes (*Procavia capensis*) which can be seen in an enclosure in the Tropical House. In order to simulate the natural environment of this species, keepers have constructed rock caves and placed logs in the enclosure.

The Hyrax is a rather puzzling animal. It is the size of a Rabbit and appears to be related to the rodents. However, on skeletal and other evidence it is almost certainly related to the ungulates and its nearest relative would seem to be the Elephant. Hyraxes form a separate order of which there are several species and sub-species distributed throughout Africa and in Israel, Syria and Arabia. There are tree dwelling and rock dwelling Hyraxes, the Cape Hyrax being the latter.

The unusual dental structure of the Hyrax is one of the main factors for classing it as a relative of the ungulates for although there are some rodent-like teeth, the upper and lower cheek teeth resemble those of the Rhinoceros and Hippopotamus respectively. There are three hoof-like toes on the hind feet and four on the front feet, the skeletal structure of the feet and front legs resembling that of the Elephant. The stomach is similar to that of a Horse and on the back there is a gland which causes the hairs of the coat to be erected when the animal is frightened or angry. In the Cape Hyrax this gland is concealed by a patch of black fur, the general body colouration being brownish-grey above with creamy underparts.

Hyraxes live in colonies of up to 50 individuals consisting of a number of families. Each family group is dominated by an adult male which has several females and young. When danger threatens, the Hyraxes run quickly to the safety of their holes in the rock, or into the trees, the males bringing up the rear. They are able to climb



CAPE HYRAX (The ear tags are for identification purposes)

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

GUIDE TO ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS

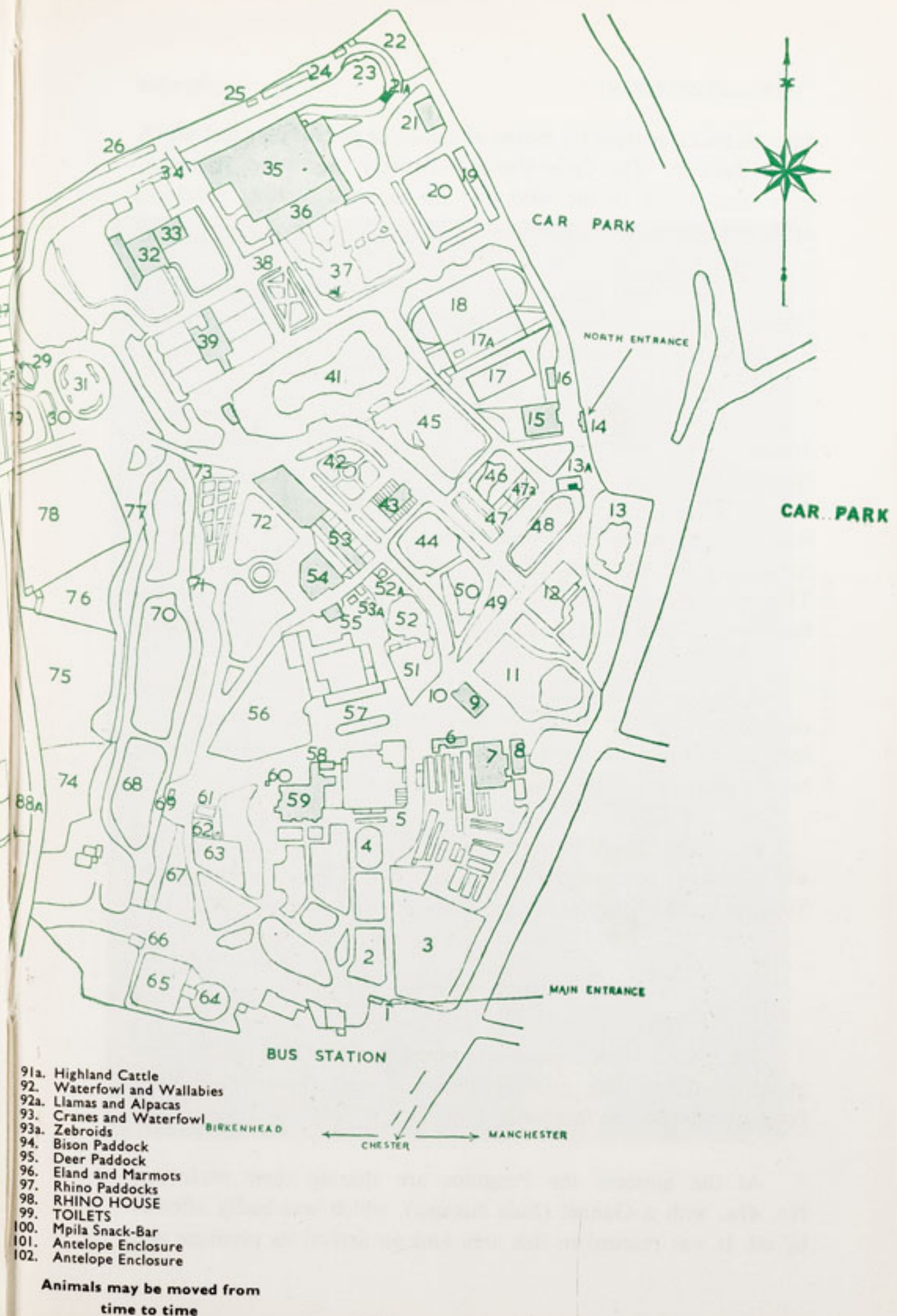
ANIMAL FEEDING TIMES

LIONS—3 p.m. except Fridays

BEARS—3-15 p.m.

POLAR BEARS—4-0 p.m.

- | | | |
|---|--|---------------------------------|
| 1. MAIN ENTRANCE | 31. Beavers | 63. Cheetahs |
| 2. Bird Enclosure | 32. Giraffe House | 64. Malayan Bears |
| 3. Wapiti Paddock | 33. Camel House | 65. Animal Enclosure |
| 4. Lesser Pandas | 34. Waterbus Halt | 66. Aviary |
| 5. Aviaries | 35. TROPICAL, NOCTURNAL AND REPTILE HOUSES | 67. Wallaby Enclosure |
| 6. Milk Bar | 36. Chimpanzee House | 68. Island |
| 7. CORONATION HALL | 37. Chimpanzee Islands | 69. WATERBUS BOOKING OFFICE |
| 8. CLOAKROOM, TOILETS, FIRST AID, MOTHER AND BABY ROOM | 38. Floribunda Rose Gardens | 70. Islands |
| 9. CAFETERIA | 39. Zebra House | 71. Waterbus Halt |
| 10. CAFETERIA | 41. Gibbon Island | 72. Flower Gardens |
| 11. Picnic Lawns | 42. H.T. Rose Garden | 73. ROSE GARDENS |
| 12. Bears | 43. Antelope Enclosure | 74. Red Lechwe |
| 13. Animal Enclosure | 44. Waterfowl Enclosure | 75. Red Lechwe |
| 13a. Kiosk | 45. Pelicans | 76. Deer or Antelope Enclosures |
| 14. NORTH ENTRANCE | 46. Flamingos | 77. Waterbus Halt |
| 15. AQUARIUM | 47. Waterfowl Enclosure | 78. Zebra and Deer Enclosure |
| 16. PUSH CHAIRS, WHEEL CHAIRS, FIRST AID, LOST CHILDREN | 47a. Penguins and Otters | 79. Kamchatka Bears |
| 17. Parrot House | 48. Sea Lion Pool | 80. Elephant Paddock |
| 17a. Large Flight Aviary | 49. Rock Garden | 81. Hippo Paddock |
| 18. APE HOUSE | 50. Polar Bears | 82. PACHYDERM HOUSE |
| 19. RAINBOW CAFE AND SHOP | 51. Tigers | 83. Tapir Enclosure |
| 20. Aviaries and Picnic Lawn | 52. Waterfowl Enclosure | 84. Small Mammal House |
| 21. TOILETS | 52a. Anteater | 85. Waterfowl Enclosure |
| 21a. Tuatara House | 53. BIRD HOUSE | 86. Antelope and Cattle |
| 22. Peccaries | 53a. Nursery | 87. Storks and Ostriches |
| 23. Waterbus Halt | 54. FOUNTAIN RESTAURANT | 88. Monkey Enclosures |
| 24. Birds of Prey Aviary | 55. TOILETS | 88a. Lion and Tiger Enclosure |
| 25. Birds of Prey Aviary | 56. Lions | 89. Cat House |
| 26. Owls | 57. NEW ZOO SHOP | 89a. Jaguars |
| 27. Jackal and Hyena Enclosures | 58. TOILETS | 90. MONKEY HOUSE |
| 28. Animal Enclosure | 59. OAKFIELD RESTAURANT | 91. Waterfowl |
| 29. Porcupines and Raccoons | 60. G.P.O. Telephone Kiosk | |
| 30. Coypus | 61. Animal Enclosure | |
| | 62. Animal Enclosure | |



- | |
|-----------------------------|
| 91a. Highland Cattle |
| 92. Waterfowl and Wallabies |
| 92a. Llamas and Alpacas |
| 93. Cranes and Waterfowl |
| 93a. Zebroids |
| 94. Bison Paddock |
| 95. Deer Paddock |
| 96. Eland and Marmots |
| 97. Rhino Paddocks |
| 98. RHINO HOUSE |
| 99. TOILETS |
| 100. Mpila Snack-Bar |
| 101. Antelope Enclosure |
| 102. Antelope Enclosure |

Animals may be moved from time to time

smooth rocks or trees by means of muscular pads on the feet which act as suckers. The Cape Hyrax is entirely vegetarian, living on grass and plants in the wild and on lucerne, carrots, potatoes, apples and bread at the Zoo.

For such small animals they have an unusually long gestation period — 225 days. Despite this and the variety of animals which prey on them their numbers do not seem to suffer.

They are settling in very well in the Tropical House but their arrival in this country was not without incident. Unfortunately they had been described as "Rock Rabbits" by the senders in South Africa. This is only a colloquial name but as Rabbits are not allowed into this country at the present time there was great difficulty in convincing the Customs officials that Hyraxes were not rodents. They were expected at Ringway Airport at 10.30 in the morning but it was 11.30 at night before they were eventually allowed through.

A female South American Tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) has arrived to replace one which died a few weeks ago. The last pair produced four young and as this new female was bred in a zoo herself we are hoping that she and the original male will be as successful.

Five Giraffes will be arriving shortly from zoos in Europe and will spend twelve months in quarantine at the Birkenhead Station. Two are destined for the herd at Chester and three for Whipsnade.

BIRD NOTES

There have been several new arrivals in the Bird Section this month including five pair of Peacocks and three Humboldt's Penguins (*Spheniscus humboldti*).

At the moment the Penguins are sharing their enclosure, No. 47a, with a Gannet (*Sula bassana*), which was badly affected by oil. It was rescued in this area and on arrival its plumage was



SOUTH AMERICAN TAPIR

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

thickly matted and there was evidence that it had also taken oil internally. There was very little hope for the bird but Gannets are fairly hardy and at the present time it seems to be recovering. Most of the oil has been preened out of the plumage but the effects of the oil which was swallowed may still be serious.

New acquisitions in the Parrot House are a pair of Great Palm Cockatoos (*Probosciger aterrimus*), a pair of Beautiful Sunbirds (*Nectarinia pulchella*) and a European Bee-eater (*Merops apiaster*).

The Beautiful Sunbirds have been released in one of the soft-bill aviaries where, as they feed on nectar in the wild we have provided special feeding apparatus. This has been made specially and consists of two feeding tubes suspended from a metal T-shaped stand. The nozzles through which the birds obtain the food are at the bottom of the tubes and face inwards so that the Sunbirds can feed from the stand. This is essential as they are unable to hover for long periods in the way that Hummingbirds do. In fact in aviaries where there are Hummingbirds as well as other nectar-feeders it has been found that the best way to ensure that both are feeding is to provide two types of stand, one having tubes with nozzles facing inwards and the other with nozzles facing outwards. Thus the Zosterops and similar birds will feed at the first type and the Hummingbirds will hover at the outside nozzles and feed from these. The "nectar" provided at the Zoo is a specially prepared solution. The stand is painted green to blend with the foliage in the aviary.

During the winter the plumage of the male and female Beautiful Sunbirds is a similar olive brown colour but in summer the male takes on very striking breeding plumage. This is predominantly metallic green in colour with a scarlet breast patch bordered with bright yellow. His long tail and wings are almost black. Both male and female have long, slender, downward-curving bills adapted for nectar feeding. The male measures about 6in. in length; the female is only 4½in. and has a much shorter tail.



GREAT PALM COCKATOOS

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

The European Bee-eater has also been released in one of the soft-bill aviaries. This species has a green and chestnut brown back, a yellowish green breast and a bright yellow throat patch. Its diet in the wild consists of bees and other insects and at the Zoo it lives on locusts, mealworms and maggots. The Bee-eater is found over much of Europe and in recent years occasional pairs have been recorded nesting and rearing young in England. It migrates to Africa during the winter. The nests are in burrows in sandbanks often in large colonies.

The Great Palm Cockatoos are beautiful birds with very dark grey to black plumage and a long crest on the head. There is a patch of naked pink skin on the cheek which becomes bluish if the bird is cold or ill and increases in size if it is angry. Various races of this Cockatoo are found in Australia and New Guinea but it is becoming very rare over all its range.

Four Sacred Ibis (*Threkiornis aethiopica*) have been acquired and these can be seen in the new flight aviary, No. 17a. They are

handsome birds about 30in. in length, with white bodies, naked black necks and heads and beautiful purple-black plumes on the tail. In flight a black border can be seen on the underside of the wings. Their bills are long and curve downwards for use in probing in mud and shallow water for food. This consists of water beetles, frogs, small reptiles, molluscs, crickets, etc., and Sacred Ibis are also known to eat carrion. They usually build nests of twigs and reeds in the tops of trees.

They are found in Africa south of the Sahara Desert, in Arabia and Madagascar but are now extinct in Egypt where they were once held sacred. The ancient Egyptians associated this species with Thoth, their god of wisdom and learning, who was usually portrayed as a man with the head of an Ibis. The Sacred Ibis appears in many Egyptian illustrations and mummified birds have been found in tombs.

Other new arrivals in the new flight aviary are two Night Herons (*Nycticorax nycticorax*) from Africa.

We have also acquired four Red-billed Oxpeckers (*Buphagus erythrorhynchus*) from East Africa. These are small birds, about 7in. in length, which perch on large mammals such as Antelope and Zebra searching for and feeding on ticks and blood-sucking flies. Not only do they rid these larger animals of parasites but also warn them of approaching danger. The Red-billed Oxpecker has light brown plumage, a yellow ring around each eye and a thick red beak.

Their numbers are gradually decreasing as the herds of wild ungulates are replaced by domestic sheep and cattle which have been dipped in various chemical solutions to kill parasites. Consequently their food supply is diminishing and the dip may well poison the birds themselves. Many farmers do not like Oxpeckers as they believe that by pecking flies away from sores and wounds they prevent them from healing. They are also reputed to be spreaders of disease but this has not been substantiated.

The birds have been released in one of the breeding aviaries and

as their feet are specially adapted for clinging we have provided a filled sack which will act as a substitute for the host animal.

Recently a visitor to the Tropical House was heard to remark about a pile of litter on top of one of the aviaries. The incident was reported to the Curator who hurried down to investigate. The keepers were baffled, insisting that the aviaries were cleared of litter every day but promised to remove it immediately. Some time later the Curator returned and found to his great annoyance that the pile of litter was still there. The keepers protested that they had removed this once and so while the Curator was there they cleared the top of the aviary and then he went up to the higher level to watch. Suddenly from the other end of the house one of the free-flying Toucans appeared with a large yellowing newspaper in its beak. It landed on the aviary at the exact place where the litter had just been removed and proceeded to stuff the newspaper into the wire. In a short time it had collected quite a pile of rubbish from the various litter bins around the house. When one of the keepers took this and put it back into a bin the bird watched and as soon as the keeper had walked away it disappeared into the bin and reappeared with its dirty yellow newspaper.

REPTILE SECTION

For the first time we have bred Texas Ratsnakes (*Elaphe obsoleta lindheimeri*). There were seven eggs, all of which hatched and the young appear to be in good health.

COVER PHOTOGRAPH

The cover photograph was taken recently when a reporter and a photographer came from the "*Weekly News*" to do an article about the Elephants and their keeper.



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

KAMCHATKA BEAR AND CUBS

The above photograph is of the Kamchatka Bear cubs and their mother. They can be seen in enclosure 79 at weekends and on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

LATEST ARRIVAL

Another two Brindled Gnus have been born, bringing the total to four which means that all the females have calves.





Printed in England by
G. R. Griffith Ltd.
Castle Printing Works
Chester
