



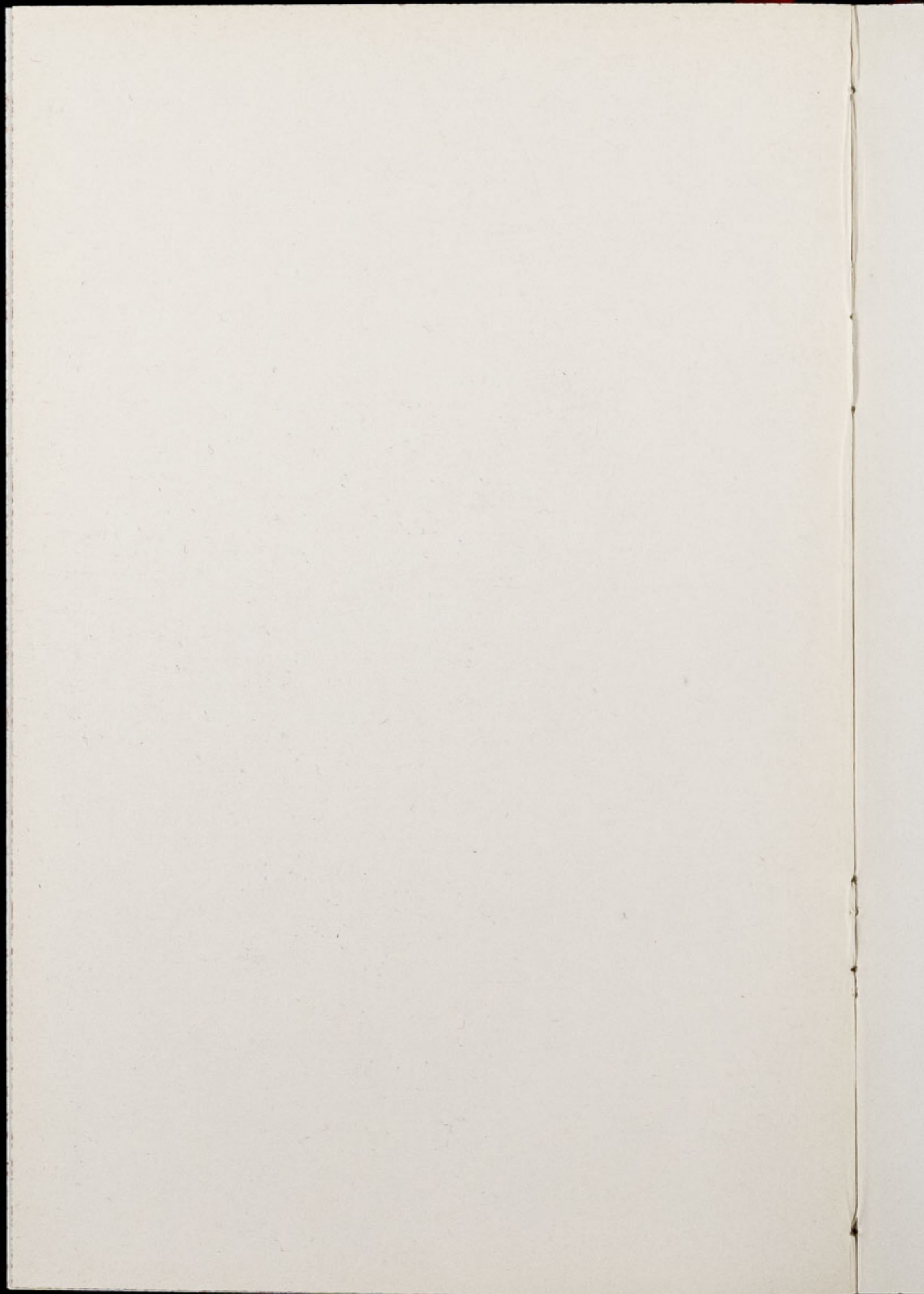
By Courtesy of Eric Kirkland, F.R.P.S.

Chester Zoo News

THE NORTH OF ENGLAND ZOOLOGICAL SOCIETY
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Introduction

We wish all our readers a very Happy and Prosperous 1963.

With the next Conference of the International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens being held in Chester in September, 1963, we can foresee a busy year ahead. As we mentioned in the November issue, Mr. G. S. Mottershead, our Director Secretary, attended the 1962 Conference in San Diego Zoo, California. Mr. Mottershead also visited Zoos in Australia, New Zealand and Japan and on page eight you can read some of Mr. Mottershead's impressions of his trip.

Our thanks are again due to the following for the photographs and illustration included in this issue.

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Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby.

COVER: Our Cover Picture this month shows one of Chester Zoo's Fennec Foxes — see page two.

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INTRODUCING THE SMALL MAMMAL HOUSE AND SOME OF ITS INHABITANTS

Another very interesting House at Chester Zoo is the Small Mammal House, which was completed in the spring of 1960. It is situated near the Pachyderm House and contains a variety of small animals. Those readers who watch the B.B.C. Television programme "World Zoos" will remember seeing one of its inhabitants — the Gibbon who accidentally escaped from the Gibbon Island and was refused re-entry by his former companions—in a recent broadcast from Chester Zoo.

Very active animals and attractive exhibits are the Ring-tailed Lemurs. It is the species of Lemur most commonly found in captivity and Chester Zoo has four specimens — three males and one female. The oldest member of the group arrived at Chester as long ago as 1951.

Like all true Lemurs the Ring-tailed Lemur is found only in Madagascar, but unlike most members of its family, the Ring-tailed Lemur is not essentially a tree dweller. It is similar to a domestic cat in size and mainly grey in colour, with touches of white on ears, face, feet and underparts. The eyes are a bright amber, circled with black fur and the most striking feature of the animal is, of course, the long, black and white ringed tail, which gives this Lemur its name.

Feeding presents no special problems. The varied diet of Chester's Ring-tailed Lemurs includes fruit, vegetables, small quantities of fresh meat and cereal meal.

Fennec Foxes are easily the prettiest of all the animals in the Small Mammal House. They look more like toys than real animals and have fine, soft fur, which is sandy yellow in colour, tinged with brown on the back. Only the size of a half-grown rabbit, the Fennec Fox has ears which appear enormous in proportion to the size of its head and body. The ears seem to frame the creamy white face and set off the large black, beady eyes of the animal. The tail is bushy and tipped with black. Fennec Foxes are nervous little things and often when their Keeper goes near, they fold back their ears



E. Kirkland

RING TAILED LEMUR



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

WOOLLY MONKEY — ALSO TO BE SEEN IN THE SMALL MAMMAL HOUSE

and show their small teeth in a threatening manner—but on the whole they are charming creatures.

They are found in the desert countryside of North Africa, Palestine and Arabia, where they live in communal burrows, sometimes in large numbers. Nocturnal by habit, Fennec Foxes spend much of their time underground — coming out in the cool of the evening to hunt for food. The enormous ears are used as food detectors, as well as for defensive purposes and they prey on small mammals and insects, etc. When searching for food they go along listening for the sound of small rodents and beetles working underground, then, having located the noise, they pounce on the spot and scratch the victim out.

Two further members of the Small Mammal House and just about the two most active animals in the Zoo, are a pair of Tayras. They never stop playing together and seem to be as much at home on the branches in their cage as they are on the ground.

The female Tayra came to us in June, 1960 — the male some months later. Both were immature animals and at first the female was completely tame and the Keeper often had her running about in the service passageway. When the male was introduced, she became less friendly with her Keepers and was obviously glad to have the companionship of another member of her species.

Tayras have extremely slender bodies and a long tail, in fact their whole appearance is typical of the weasel family, to which they belong. The head is large for the width of the body and seems slightly out of proportion.

In the wild they are partly nocturnal — preferring to lie up during the heat of the day and coming out again during the evening and early morning. Tayras sometimes hunt singly and sometimes in company. Frequenting forest as much as open country, they spend a great deal of time in trees and feed on eggs, fledglings and birds, as well as small rodents and other mammals.

PLANTS IN THE SMALL MAMMAL HOUSE

This House has been almost entirely devoted to Passifloras (Passion Flowers). They have been planted in a border in the centre of the House, with a dual purpose in mind. The roof of this House is of fibre glass — giving plenty of light to the interior of the animal cages, but has the disadvantage of causing a reflection when one is looking at the animals through the glass. Thus the Passifloras were planted to give a profusion of growth and flower to the roof of the House and also to stop the reflection. This dual purpose has been achieved.

The Passiflora has been named the Passion Flower because early Roman Catholic Priests found in the plants, features which they regarded as symbols of the crucifixion. Thus the five stamens were the five wounds; the three stigmas the three nails; the style of the pistil the flogging column; the corona the crown of thorns; the fingered leaves the hands of the multitude; the coiled tendrils the flogging cords; and the five sepals and five petals the ten disciples (Peter and Judas being omitted from the count).

The Passifloras are mostly greenhouse climbers and we have three varieties in this House.

Passiflora caerulea covers most of the space and is the hardiest of the Passifloras. Being slightly tender it will grow outside in Devon and Cornwall, but not with us at Chester. It is a native of Brazil and has pale pink, white and purple flowers. The biblical story can best be read in this variety.

Passiflora quadrangularis is the most spectacular of the three varieties. It comes from tropical America and requires far more heat than *caerulea*. It is planted at the far end of the House — the

warmest end. The heating of this House is limited and we almost lost it during the severe frosts of last winter. Its survival was in doubt for quite a long time, but eventually it recovered and gave a profusion of flower later in the summer. The variety has large saucer-shaped, red, white and violet flowers.

The other variety we have here — *Passiflora coccinea* — was only planted last spring and has yet to show us its scarlet flowers, which are similar in shape to those of *caerulea*.

The plant troughs which run the length of the House above the public passage ways are planted each spring with a variety of trailing plants, which completes the density of light coverage.

STORM DAMAGE

The gales of mid-December caused considerable havoc in the Zoo. On the night of 15th December so many trees were blown down that it was feared that the resulting damage to fences would allow some of the deer to escape. (The Lions and Tigers are of course always shut in their dens whenever there is a storm warning). In actual fact the Père David Stag, who is a very dangerous animal, did escape, but returned to his paddock of his own free will. Whilst at liberty the deer had apparently consumed some poisonous shrub and was a very sick animal the following morning. We are happy to report that he has now recovered completely.

Another large tree came down by the Wapiti enclosure — fortunately it fell away from the fence but blocked the public roadway.

By far the most serious damage was suffered by the Tropical House which is, of course, still under construction. Large sections of the roof were blown over a wide area and the extent of the damage is estimated to be in the region of £2,000. Naturally we are very anxious to get this building completed and perhaps the most serious aspect of the storm is the loss of several months work on this house.

IMPRESSIONS OF SAN DIEGO

Our Director-Secretary and his wife attended the Conference of the International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens, which was held in San Diego in September 1962. Afterwards they visited Australia, New Zealand and Japan. Many readers have asked for Mr. Mottershead's impressions of the Zoos they visited and in this issue he writes of the San Diego Zoo.

"It was a great joy to me to visit San Diego Zoo. I had always regretted that I had not been able to visit it on previous trips to America. This Zoo is delightful and I was very impressed indeed with almost everything I saw.

One had not to be inside the Zoo long to realise that it was being cared for in the best possible manner. The cleanliness of the Gardens was apparent from the start, and, as this Zoo is visited by vast crowds of people each year, the absence of litter was remarkable.

On entering the gates, the magnificent display of flamingoes; exhibited against a background of tropical and sub-tropical plants; was a most effective introduction to the Gardens — which must surely be one of the finest in the world.

It would be very difficult for me to say which exhibit I liked best, as there were so many attractive enclosures. Being primarily a bird lover, the "Tropical Rain Forest" appealed to me immensely, particularly as we are building a Tropical House at Chester something on the same principle. Whereas San Diego's huge aviary had to be covered with fine nylon netting to keep out the sunlight, we at Chester have had to put on a glass and plastic roof, to keep out the cold and adverse weather conditions. There is much to be said for exhibiting birds in large mixed aviaries of this kind. Care must, of course, be taken to ensure that no really pugnacious species are introduced, which would attack some of the weaker species. These large aviaries, I feel, create a sense of anticipation and expectancy as one wanders through the enclosure, looking for different birds and actually seeing them in natural conditions. I was given to understand that there are roughly one hundred different species of bird in the "Tropical Rain Forest" and I can well believe it. It is certainly an exhibit well worth seeing.

I thought the enclosures containing the Hippopotami were very attractive. The background of vegetation, to my mind, helped to display these bulky animals to much better advantage than the bare walls and concrete floors of so many Zoos. In the Hippo pool at San Diego are literally hundreds of waterfowl and these make a colourful addition to the scene.

Of course the display of Okapi is unique. San Diego is to be congratulated on the way it has bred this animal, which, at one time, was in grave danger of extinction. The Okapi enclosure is full of trees and as the animal is essentially a forest dweller, it looks very much at home in San Diego Zoo.

San Diego, like Chester, demands some form of transport for footsore visitors. Whereas at Chester we have a limited canal system, in San Diego they have a very effective method of conveying visitors around the Zoo — by means of conducted bus tours. The drivers seemed so conversant with every aspect of the animal and bird enclosures visited, that the tours are of definite educational value to visitors, as well as being an enjoyable way of seeing this charming Zoo.

Whilst in San Diego our hosts arranged a series of very interesting outings, one of which was a trip to the Coronada Islands. There we saw thousands of Brown Pelicans, Californian Sea Lions and Sea Elephants. One thing which surprised me was the height the Sea Lions climbed. Some were resting on ledges as much as one hundred feet up the rock face.

Another particularly interesting trip was made to Marineland of the Pacific. What a magnificent display of Whales, Porpoises, Sea Lions and Fish they have!

The climate in San Diego is probably the most perfect that any Zoo Director could wish and many of the problems with which I, together with many other Zoo Directors, have to contend, are non-existent here. We certainly appreciated the wonderful climate during our short stay in San Diego.

In the next issue I will tell you a little about Zoos in Australia, New Zealand and Japan."

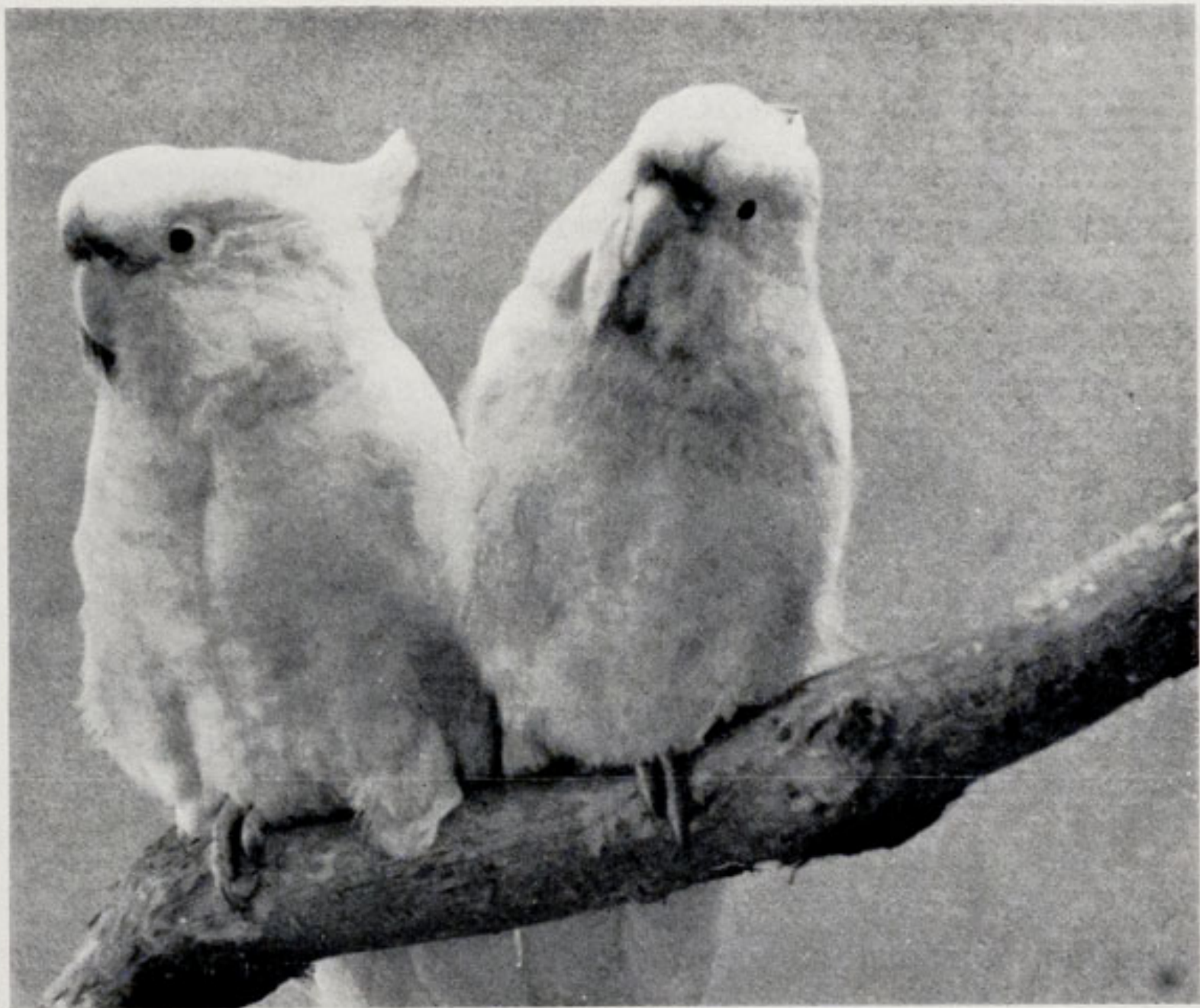
WINTERTIME IN THE PARROT HOUSE

Just as many people flee the British winter and make for the South of France, so many of our delicate tropical birds must move from their summer aviaries to warmer winter quarters. If any of your favourites are not to be found in their usual aviaries, it is more than likely that you will find them in the Parrot House.

During the winter the Parrots and their guests do not make use of the outside flights, except for perhaps an hour or two at mid-day, when the sun is out. The presence of uninvited guests seems to make the Parrot tribe even noisier than usual — if that is possible. They seem to delight in showing off their linguistic ability and shrieking power to the "lesser breeds."

Among those avoiding the outside cold is our White-winged Trumpeter, a bird the size of a Pheasant, but more the shape of a large Partridge. Blue/black in colour with white wings, this bird delights in human company and is the friendliest bird in the collection. Trumpeters are South American birds, their family being in the same order as Cranes and Sun Bitterns. In their homeland they are often hand-reared and thereafter live with the family poultry. Being omnivorous, they are easily catered for and our bird flourishes on a diet of grain, seed, chopped fruit and a little minced meat. A small mouse is very welcome. As Trumpeters feet are extremely sensitive to frost bite, this bird must be wintered in the warmth of deep peat.

Other South American birds which are wintering in the warmth are our three Crested Curassows. These large birds — the size of a Hen Turkey — belong to the same order as the Pheasants and have a strong family resemblance. Our three, a cock and two hens, cannot be housed together, since the ladies do not agree.



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

LEADBEATTERS COCKATOOS

It would be wrong to think that only the bird inhabitants of South America feel the cold. African members of the Pheasant family — the Vulturine Guinea Fowl, a pair of Crested Guinea Fowl and a Congo Black Guinea Fowl — also winter in the Parrot House. They also tend to suffer from frost-bitten feet and this applies to nearly all tropical ground birds.

A number of tropical Parrots, Parrakeets and Conures are also brought inside for the winter and the atmosphere in the Parrot House is currently reminiscent of a Party Political Conference — everyone talking and no-one listening.

SNOW HAZARDS

The severe blizzard which spread right over the country at the end of December brought its anxious moments to the Zoo.

Several winters ago, when a similar blizzard raged—drifts of snow piled up inside the Malayan Bear enclosure, to such an extent that the Bears simply walked out. Therefore we were most anxious that there should be no repetition of this incident. To prevent escapes it was necessary to trap all the Bears and hold them in their indoor enclosures until the risk of snow piling up had gone.

The Polar Bear enclosure was of course the most worrying, because their pool was frozen over and snow drifts on top of the ice would have made it a simple matter for the Bears to climb onto the wall. We drained the water from the pool, with the result that the ice caved in and the enclosure was once more escape-proof.

Another grave worry in snow storms is the damage that heavy falls of snow can do to outside aviaries. The aviaries are built to hold light wire netting only and they have to be propped up and strengthened to bear the weight of the snow.

Yet another problem which presents itself to an open-air Zoo such as ours, is the freezing of the water which confines some of the animals. We are, of course, able to shut the Chimpanzees, Gorillas and Orang-utans indoors, when the water is frozen. However, the Gibbons, which live entirely out of doors on an island and are completely free, are a bigger headache. Last winter the Gibbon mentioned on page two came off the island and could not be re-introduced after the thaw. Needless to say we did not want the same thing to happen this year and after several of the Gibbons had ventured onto the ice the whole colony was caught up until the thaw set in.

The Patas Monkey—"Sailor"—who lives on the island by the Waterbus Terminus, crossed the ice several times and returned to his island whenever anyone approached. Eventually he became so confident on the ice that he walked the length of the frozen canal system and left the Zoo by the North Entrance gate. He was heading for Upton village when spotted and was recaptured without any trouble.

Fortunately snow storms such as we experienced are very rare at Chester.

REPTILE HOUSE NEWS

New additions to our Reptile collection have purposely been restricted this year, because the collection will have to undergo a move to the new Tropical House, as soon as the Reptile section of the building is completed.

By far the most spectacular new arrival is a twenty foot Reticulated Python — which came to us in October. It is a magnificent snake, weighing over one hundred pounds and with an enormous head. When in first class condition, the colours and markings of the Reticulated Python undoubtedly make it one of the most handsome members of the Python family. It sloughed its skin soon after arrival and is getting ready to do so again. The skin came off in small pieces the first time, but we hope the Python will make a better job of it this time and then start to feed. Reticulated Pythons are usually very bad-tempered creatures, but this specimen is particularly docile. However, this may change once he has commenced feeding.

Reticulated Pythons are found throughout South East Asia and, together with the Anaconda from South America, hold the record for being the longest snakes in the world — lengths of up to thirty feet having been recorded.

Some months ago we were presented with a lovely young Bull Snake — or Gopher Snake as it is sometimes called. This is a particularly attractive snake and one of the most economically useful snakes in the entire United States. It lends valuable aid to farmers there, by devouring mice, rats, pocket-gophers and other pests — to such an extent that in many parts it is virtually protected. Its record is not always so praiseworthy, for in many instances it takes to raiding henhouses — stealing many eggs and swallowing them whole, then constricting its throat muscles until the shell breaks.

AQUARIUM NEWS

This month in the Aquarium, additional specimens of the following fish have been added to the tropical section:— Blue and Dwarf Gouramies, Leaf Fish, Paradise Fish and Sucking Loach.

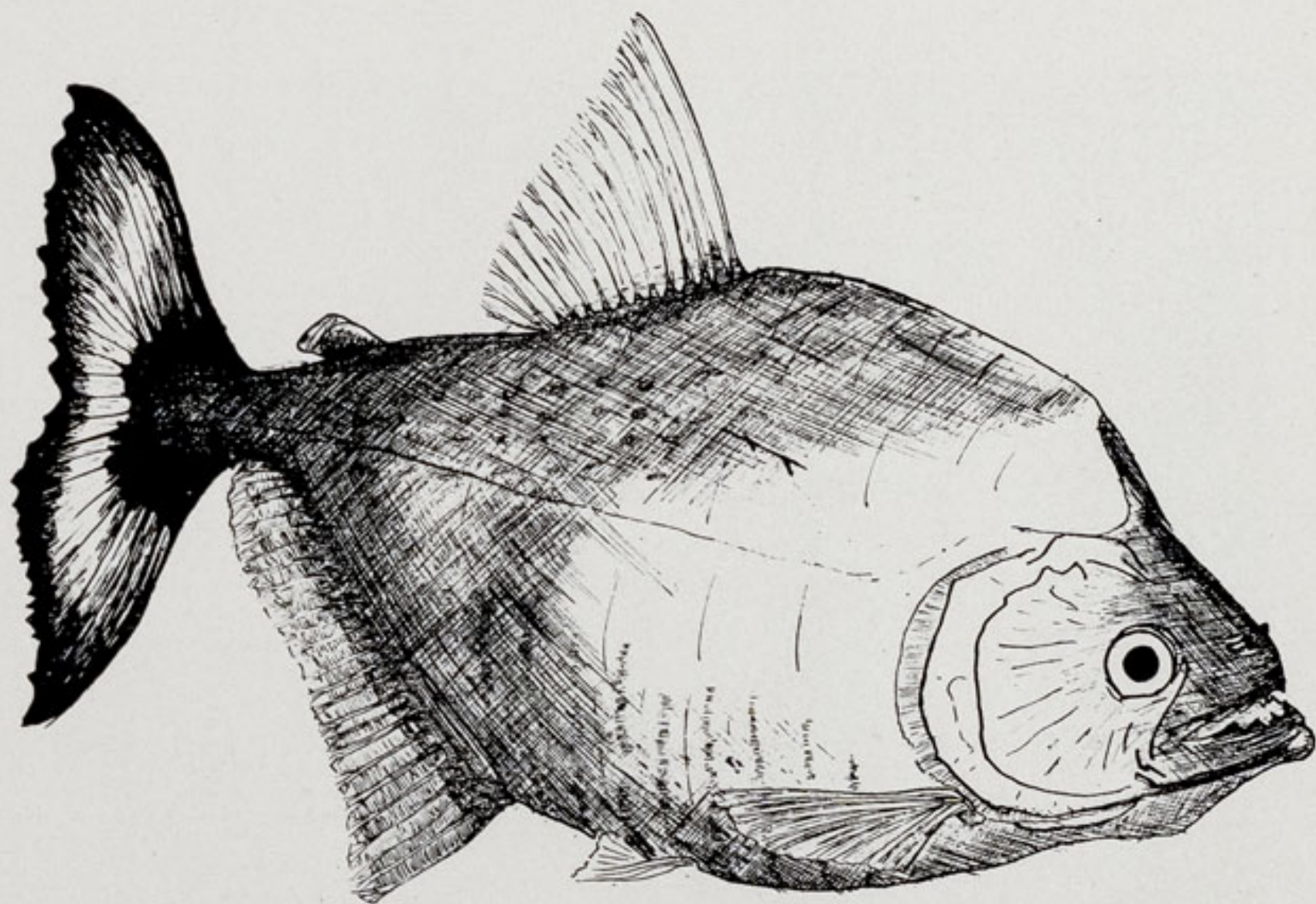
All these are young specimens and consequently the brilliant colours of maturity will not become apparent until next summer. Most of these fish display a range of brilliant reds, greens and blues.

The family characidæ from tropical America and Africa, provides the observer with a diversity of shape and colour rarely equalled in the animal world.

Included in this large family is the Piranha, whose reputation as a 'killer' is well known. Another member is the Blind Cave Fish which, through generations of living in constant darkness in caves, has lost all external signs of eyes; indeed all that remains where once eyes were is tissue, sensitive only to changes in light and dark. Last but not least the family Characidæ includes dozens of small brilliantly coloured fish, popularly known as Tetras.

This last mentioned group—the Tetras—forms a good proportion of the collection in the Aquarium. At present there are fourteen species, numbering approximately two hundred individuals.

These fish rarely exceed two and a half inches in length, but make up for their diminutive size with a range of colours which has to be seen to be believed. Most of the specimens in the collection bear a characteristic flash of colour on each side of the body—generally in shades of blue, red or green. This is shown to better advantage if a shoal of these fish suddenly faces in the same direction—giving the impression of a moving pattern rather than individual fish.



M. D. Murphy

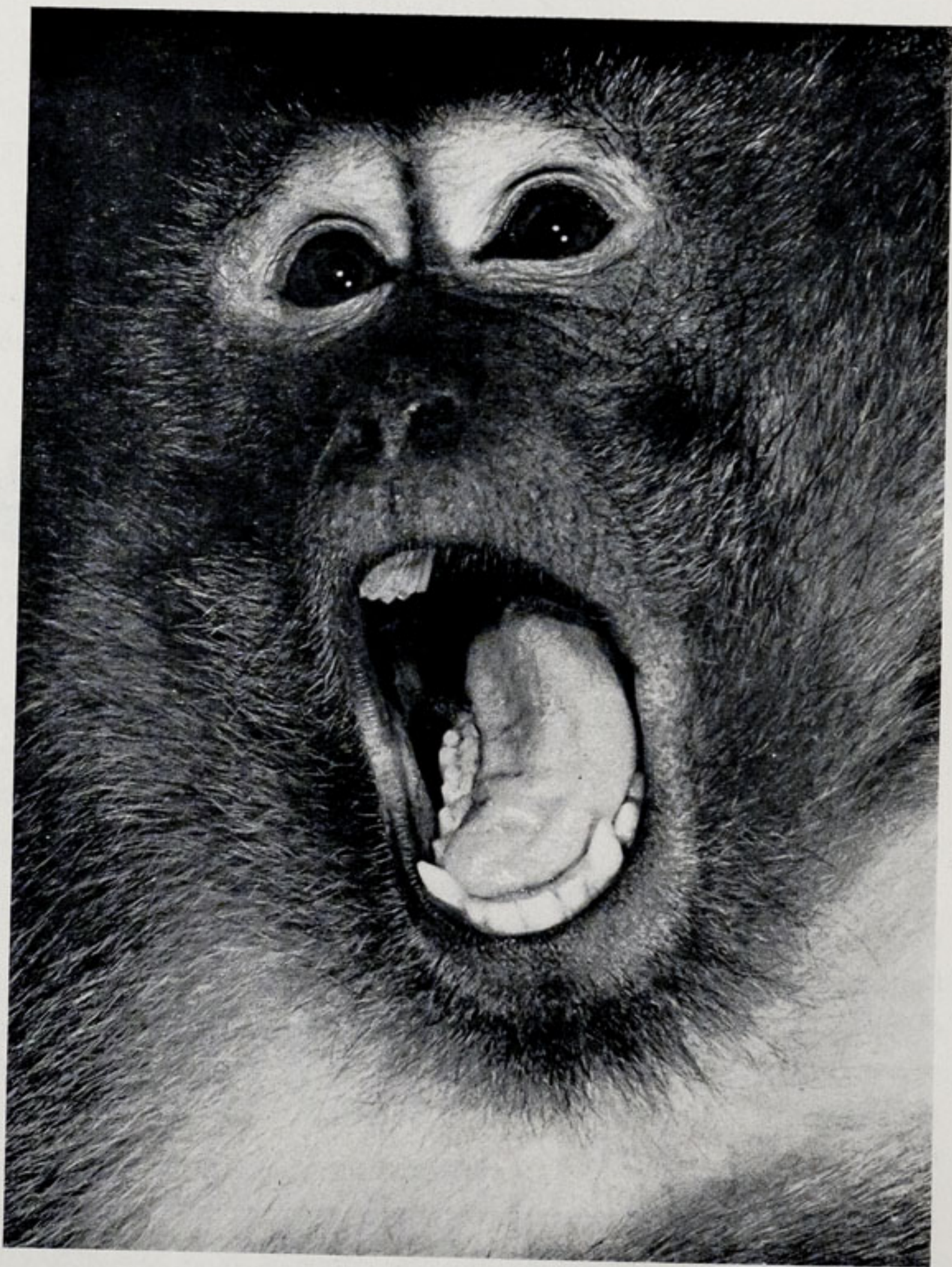
PIRANHA

Because of their preference for acid water, these Tetras do very well in the Aquarium, as most of the tanks have chunks of peat in the gravel, which helps to support the plant life and is the best way of ensuring a fairly high acid content. Some of the older inhabitants of the Aquarium are the Cardinal Tetras, which have reigned in all their glory for four years and show every sign of doing so for another four.

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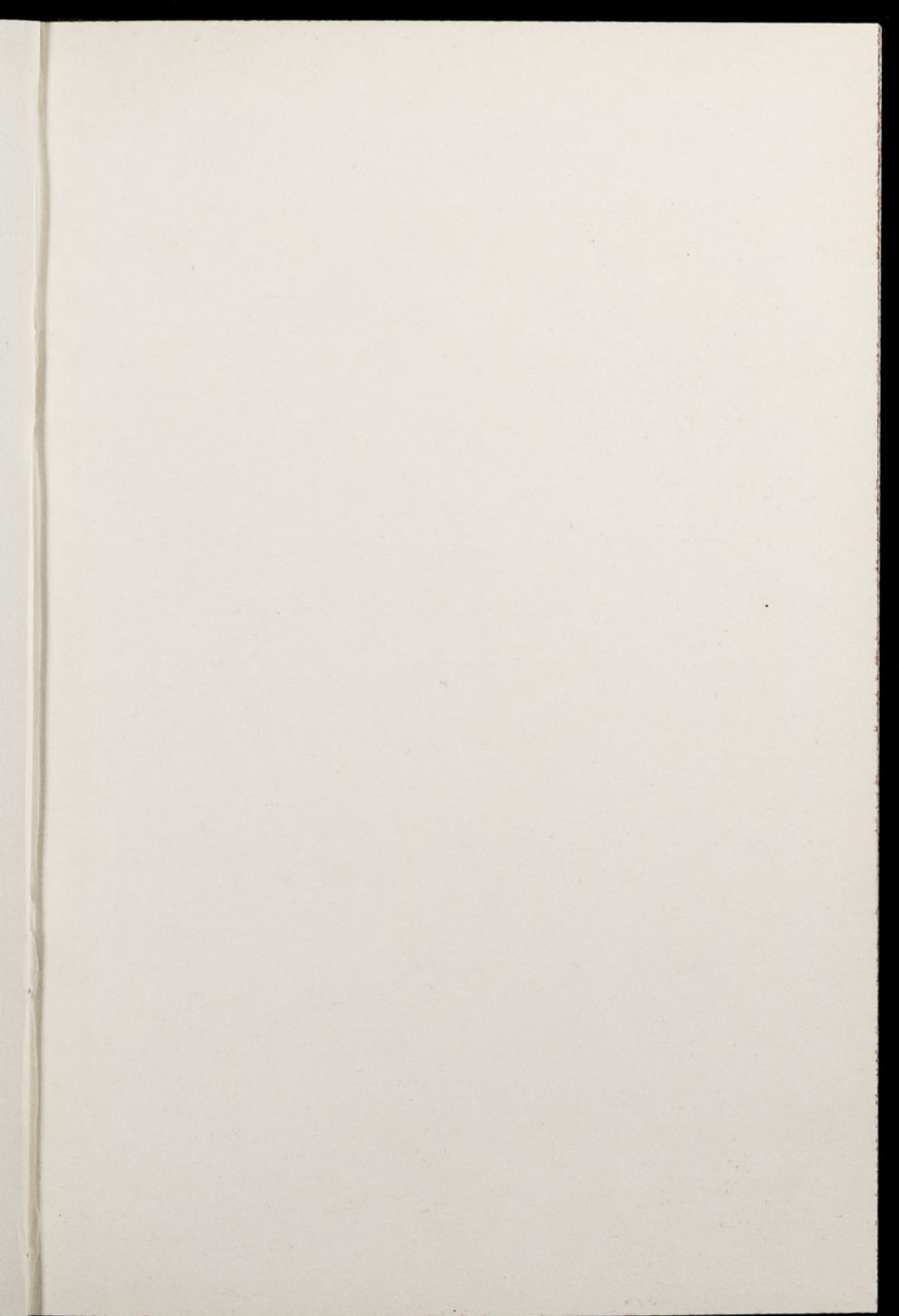
Even in the bitterly cold winter months, Zoo babies continue to arrive.

The latest arrival is a male Common Zebra foal, which has been christened "Blackie."



E. Kirkland

"SAY AH!"



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