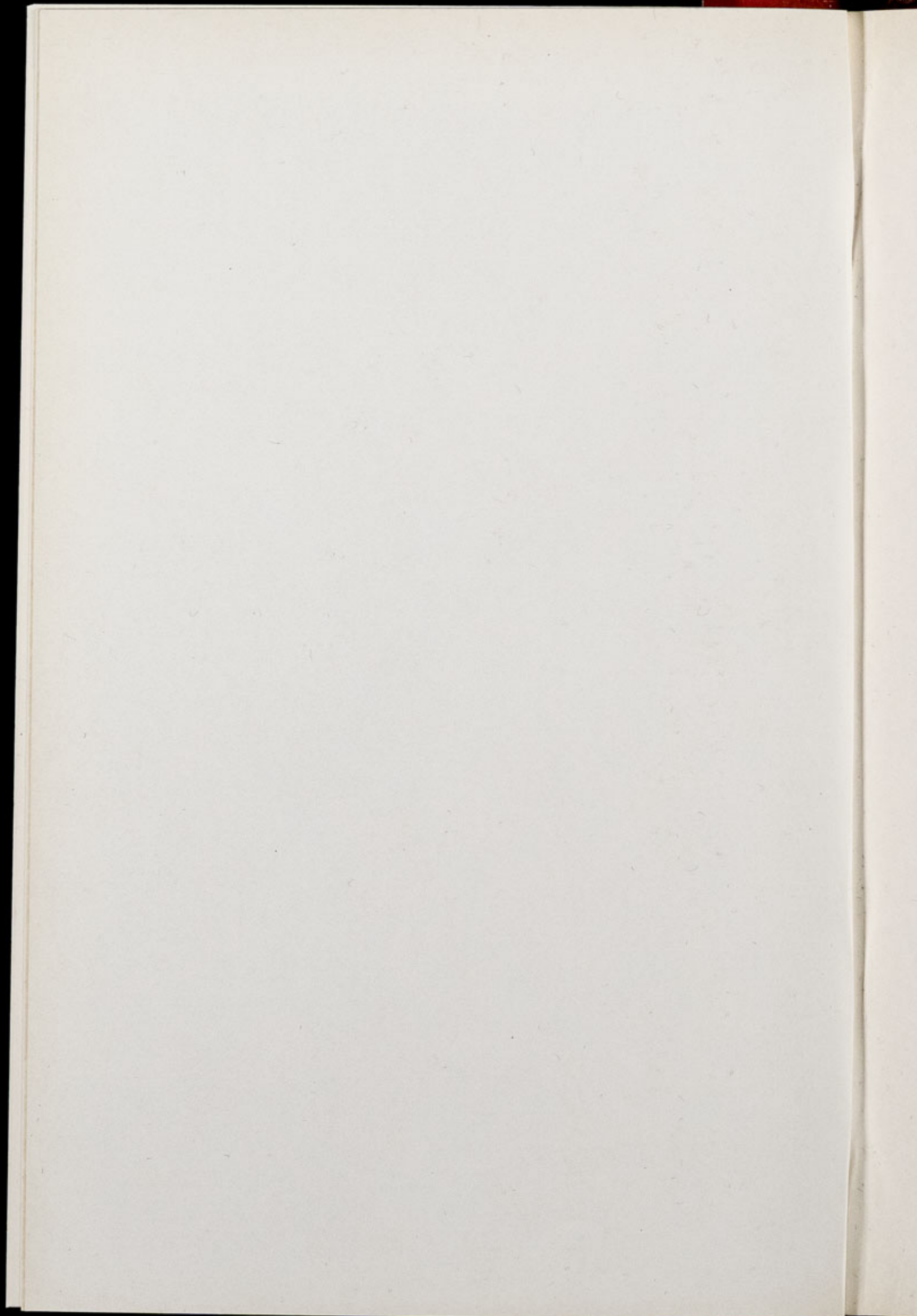


CHESTER ZOO NEWS

AND GUIDE

April 1976

Price 10p



The North of England Zoological Society

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COVER

Polar Bear "Rubble"

By courtesy of Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

Annual subscription — Two Pounds, postage paid

Telephone Chester 20106/7/8

COVER PHOTOGRAPH

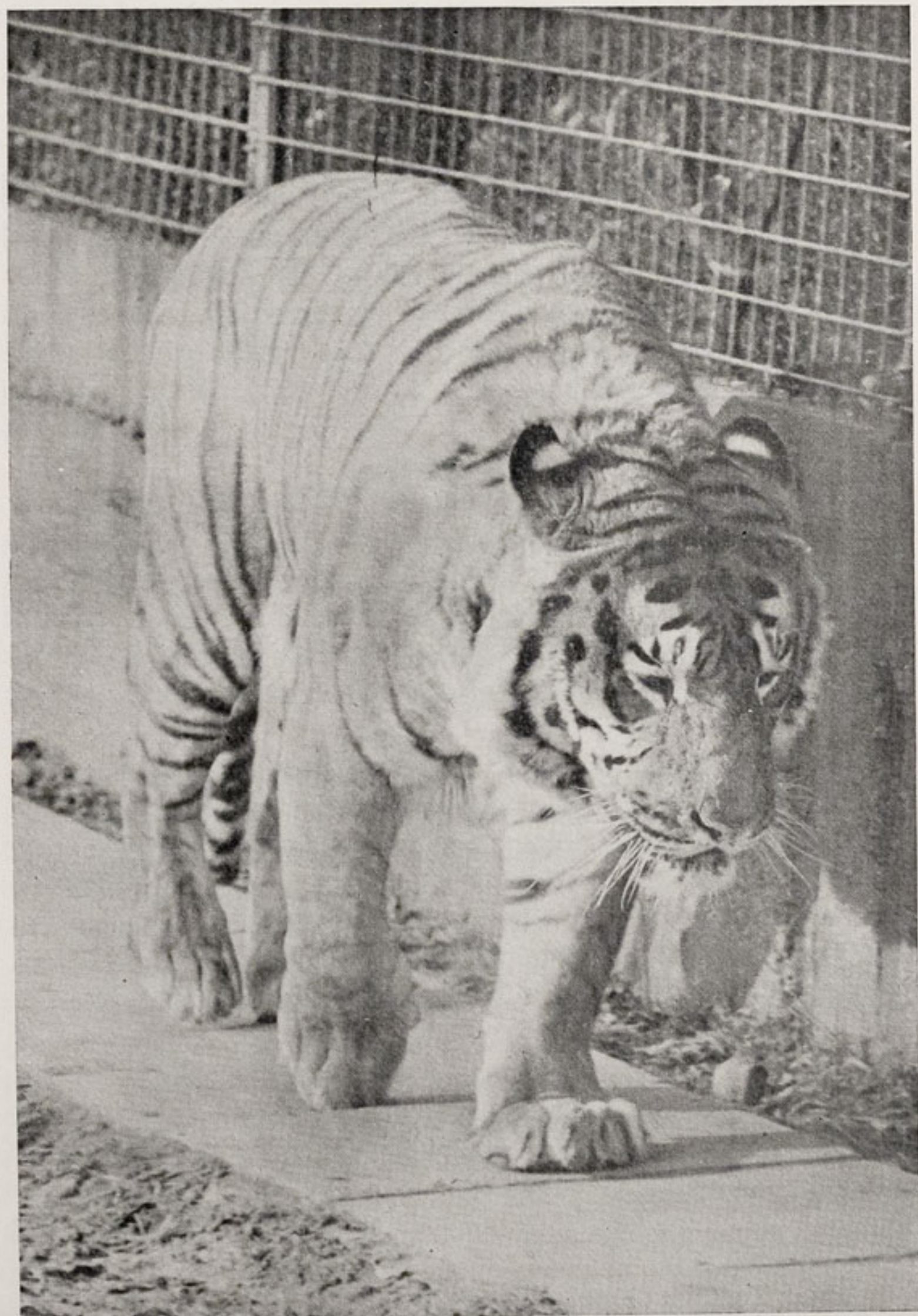
Our Cover Photograph is that of Polar Bear "Rubble" (*Thalarcos maritimus*). We acquired our two female Polar Bears "Rack" and "Ruin" in 1947 from Antwerp, and our male "Rubble" came to us in 1950 from Brussels. The two females have bred a number of cubs, all sired by "Rubble" and our male "Mottie" who was bred in the zoo in 1959.

GENERAL NEWS

Twins have again been born to Ring-tailed Lemur "Coata", and the father is "Abi". "Coata" is an excellent mother and presents us with twins quite regularly. She came to us from Bristol Zoo in exchange, and is the daughter of "Dottie" in the T.V. Programme "Animal Magic". "Abi" has been bred here at the zoo. Readers may be interested to hear that twins "Sherry" and "Shandy" (also bred at the zoo) have now been separated. "Sherry" has been sent to Bristol Zoo, and "Shandy" to Naples Zoo. Naples have sent a female to us; she is still in quarantine and will not be on show in the Monkey House for a while.

Lemurs breed once or twice a year, and their progeny is one or two. With "Coata" twins seem to be the rule. The new babies are on show in the Monkey House and can occasionally be seen clinging to their mother's underside. At the time of writing the twins are minute. The whole family gathers round the mother and babies, and would appear to be assisting in the care of the young, keeping them warm, and grooming.

Lemur catta originate from Madagascar. Their colouring is black and white. Their faces are long and their ears are partially haired and fairly short. The back legs of these animals are longer than the front ones; their tails and slender bodies are heavily furred.



By courtesy of Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

ONE OF OUR YOUNG BENGAL TIGERS (*Panthera tigris*)

The young at birth have their eyes open, and their bodies are covered with short, thick hair, only the tail being sparingly furred.

* * *

Since the storm early in January this year, work has continued on the repair and replacement of damaged areas of the zoo. The most urgent work was at the west end of the Pachyderm House where the tapirs are housed, and this has been satisfactorily completed.

BIRD NOTES

The following birds have been presented to us:

- 1 Pair Weka Rail (*Gallirallus australis*)
- 1 Plum-headed Parrakeet (*Psittacula cyanocephala*)
- 1 African-grey Parrot (*Psittacus erithacus*)

We had recently achieved a third breeding of the Weka Rail. The species *Gallirallus australis* originates from New Zealand where its numbers have become very much reduced. Unfortunately, of the two Weka Rails bred in the zoo recently, one escaped when a hole was cut by vandals in the mesh surrounding their aviary. In this event it is most fortunate that we have had a pair of these birds presented to us, and we hope to go on breeding the Weka Rail.

REPTILE NEWS

A number of reptiles have recently been presented to the zoo, and these are as follows:

- 3 Star Tortoise (*Testudo elegans*)
- 1 Leopard Tortoise (*Testudo pardalis*)
- 1 Forest Tortoise
- 1 Bengal Monitor

The following have been received in exchange:

1 Water Python (*Liasis fuscus*)

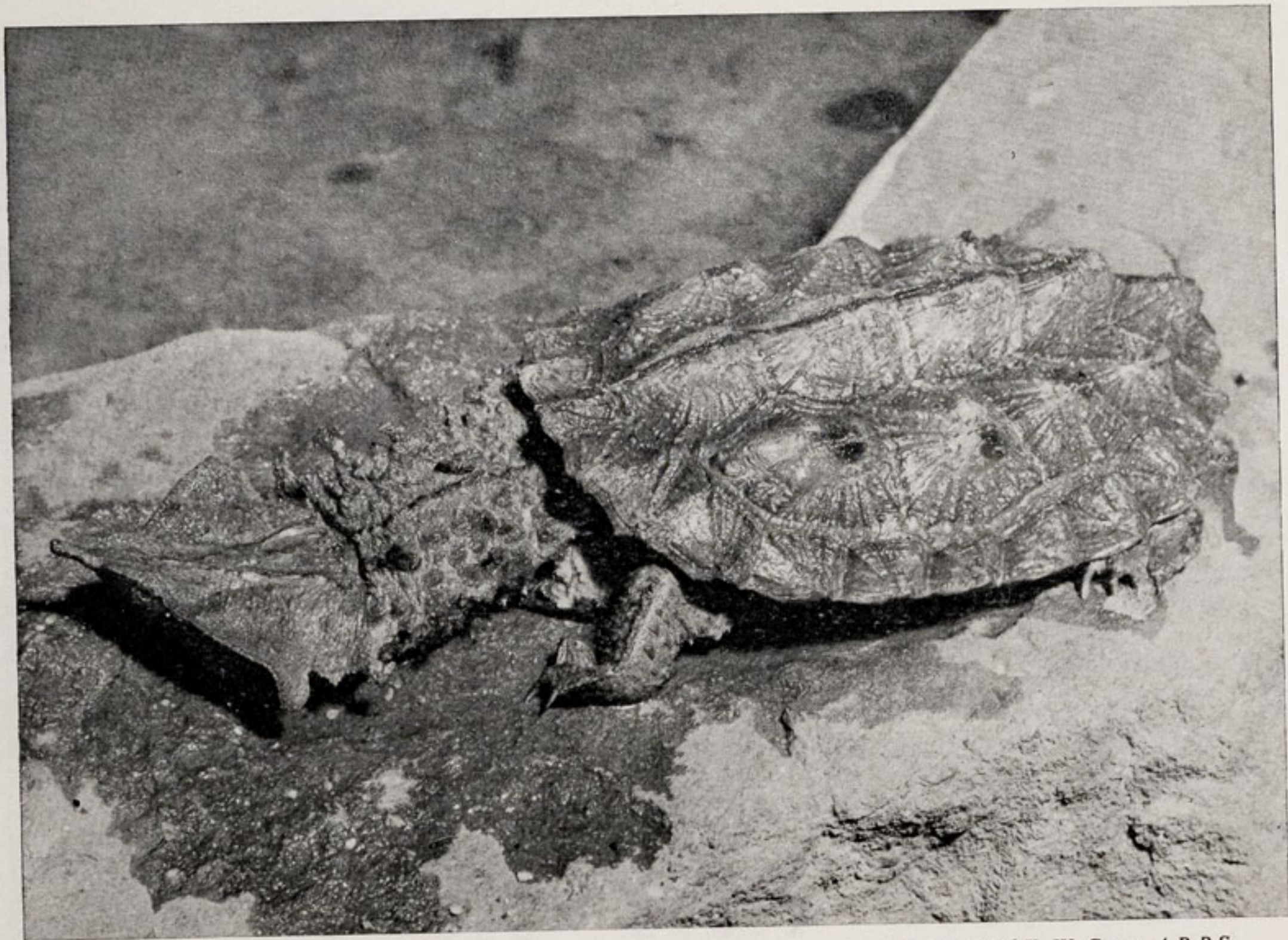
1 Matamata Turtle (*Chelys fimbriata*)

The Water Python has been acquired to add to our Australian collection. It is about 5 ft. long and will grow to about 8 ft. It is doing well and has settled down in the vivarium. The distribution of the *Liasis fuscus* is in all far northern watercourses which empty into the sea, and it is therefore to be found in salt-water mangroves. However, this species does not spend all of its time in water. Its colour is a rich glossy-brown, except on the belly, which is an apricot colour.

We have had a female Matamata Turtle in the collection for about the last five years, and the one we have now acquired is a male. When it arrived its carapace was 3 in. long, and this will grow to about 12 in. Matamata Turtles do not do well in captivity and are difficult to keep, but we are hoping that we might breed from the pair. These turtles can attain a weight of about sixteen pounds.

The Matamata Turtle is confined to South America (including the island of Trinidad), New Guinea, and Australia; it is widely distributed from Colombia and the Guianas through the Amazon drainage.

This is a most queer looking turtle, and was discovered about the middle of the eighteenth century. The Matamata (*Chelus* or *Chelys fimbriata*) at first glance does not look like anything in particular, but on closer observation one feels that it must be a turtle. Its tail is short, the shell is heavy and lumpy and may exceed a foot in length. Its toes are webbed, and it has a long thick neck. Its head is big, broad and flattened, and is completely disguised by an unbelievable number of protuberances which emerge from all directions. Its very odd appearance combines to produce an excellent camouflage. This is also a most curious turtle in that it seems to be leering or grinning, and its expression is due to the arrangement of the eyes, nose, mouth and chin. The small eyes and the nose project far beyond the mouth. The jaws of this turtle are fleshy, and not sharp-edged.



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

MATAMATA TURTLE (*Chelys fimbriata*) TO BE SEEN IN THE REPTILE HOUSE

The method of eating of the Matamata Turtle is often to snap up its prey, and this is achieved by the opening of its mouth and the enormous expansion of the neck, causing any near-by object to rush into the opening along with water. This creates a dull sound which can be heard at a distance of several feet.

* * *

We have recently bred seven Eastern Pigmy Rattlesnakes (*Sistrurus miliarius miliarius*). The parents were presented to us by Oklahoma Zoo. The adults are quite small, but the youngsters are very tiny and we are hoping we can rear them. At the time of writing the young are beginning to feed and this is a good sign.

Although the adult Pigmy Rattlesnake is very small it has a long, slender tail. It is the smallest snake inhabiting the eastern and central parts of the United States. The overall adult length is about 17 in., and its tail is approximately $2\frac{3}{8}$ in.

Fully-grown Pigmy Rattlesnakes are ash-grey in colour, and they have a number of large black blotches on their backs. These are irregularly rounded, and most often separated by reddish spaces. The red is usually more prominent on the front part, and in some cases only on the neck. There are one or two series of black spots on the sides much smaller and less distinct than those on their backs. Their undersides have a dull white effect with black blotches.

The distribution of *Sistrurus m. miliarius* is from Charleston, through to higher ground, extending westward through northern Georgia and northern Alabama to the eastern side of Mississippi Valley north of the lower country near the river mouth.

This snake is venomous and its rattle cannot be heard more than a few feet away. Its bite, however, is rarely fatal to man. It is common in South Carolina and Georgia.

* * *

In the Reptile House there are a number of eggs which are being artificially incubated. We have had a third batch of Thailand

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. 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. Blackback
 101. Wallabies
 102. Animal Paddock
 103. Animal Paddock
 104. Animal Paddock
- } under construction

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.

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

Water Dragon eggs (*Physignathus cocincinus*), and several African Python eggs (*Python sebae*). Readers may remember that we successfully bred six African Pythons last year. Our Leopard Geckos (*Eublepharis macularis*) have laid eggs recently and more are on the way. Twelve were bred last year and we have been breeding from one pair for several years.

* * *

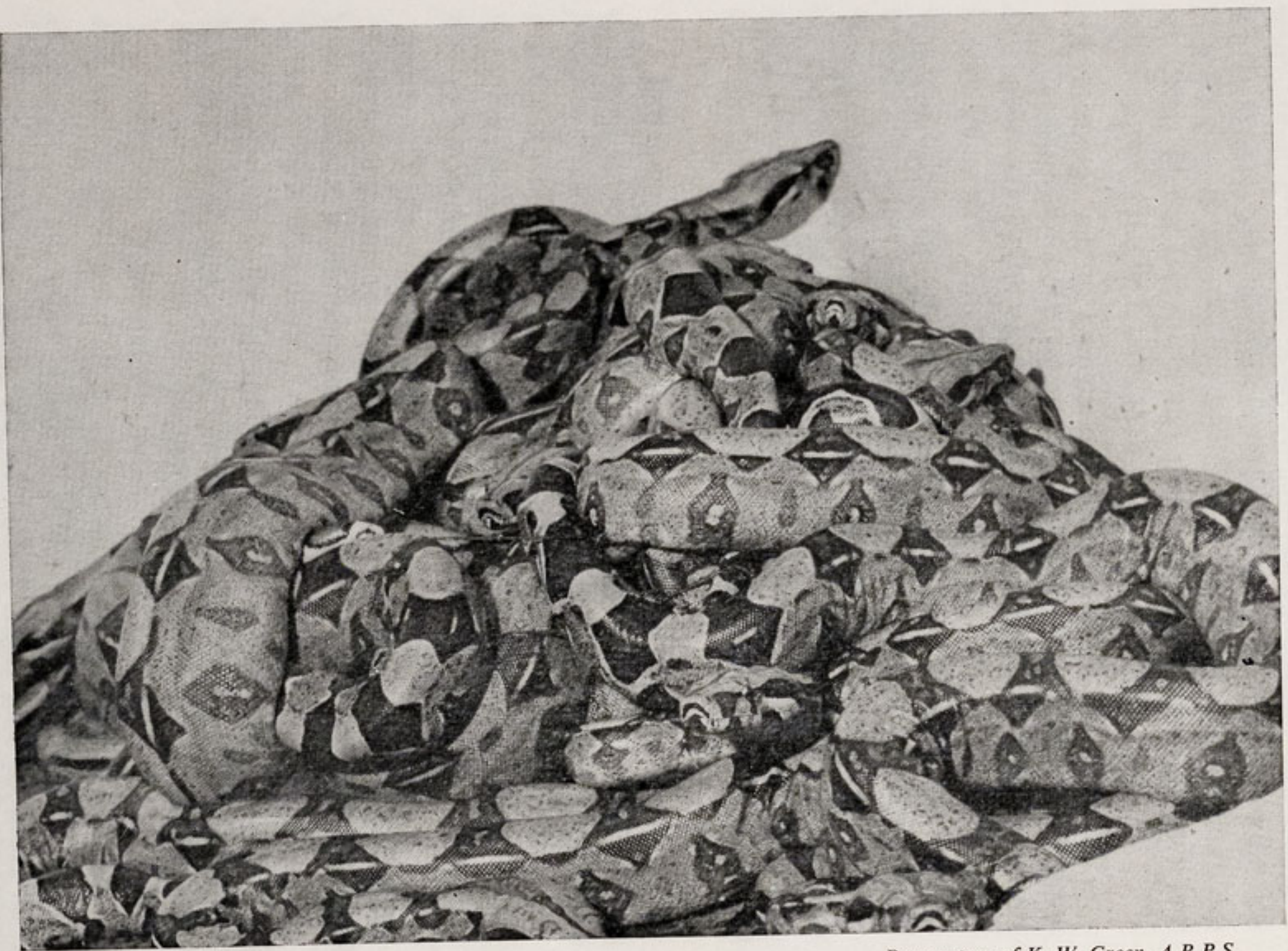
Our female Boa (*Constrictor constrictor*) was presented to us by a lady who had had her as a family pet for fifteen years. We introduced her to our group of Common Boas, and a few days ago she presented us with twenty-two young.

In the wild the Boa constrictor is widely distributed from northern Argentine in the south to Sonora and Tamaulipas in the north. It thrives in jungle, savanna, and cultivated areas such as cane fields, from sea level to moderate elevations. These Boas eat large lizards, birds, opossums, mongooses, and rodents such as rats, squirrels, agoutis, and pacas.

AQUARIUM NEWS

Quite a number of freshwater tropical fishes have been acquired for the Aquarium, and these are as follows:

A number of Combtail Paradise Fish (*Belontia signata*) have been presented. The colour of these fishes is rather unexciting and so they are rarely kept by the aquarist. In young specimens green is the dominant colour, but as the fishes mature reddish hues develop until they may ultimately become a deep mahogany-brown with a faintly defined pattern of lighter bars on the flanks. The Combtail Paradise Fish is distinguished by its ragged caudal fin resembling a comb. This of course gives it its popular name. An unusual feature is the dorsal fin of the male which comes to a fine point, extending over half the length of the tail; the dorsal fin of the female is rounded.



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

BOAS (*Constrictor constrictor*) A FEW DAYS OLD

This is a shy fish and only mixes well with other fishes of its own size. At breeding times it has viscious tendencies. Its diet is a mixed one, but composed mainly of meat. It is a bubble-nest builder. Combtail Paradise Fishes are natives of Ceylon and are reported to attain a size of about 5 in. in the wild, but in aquaria they only grow to about 4 in.

We have not exhibited *Belontia signata* in the aquarium for some time and we are pleased to have them. They have been put in a tank with the Red Swordtails (*Xiphophorus helleri*).

We have some new Blind Cave Fishes (*Anoptichthys jordani*). These fishes are, in fact, blind and cannot see their food or anything else, but their sense of smell is very highly developed. They rarely bump into anything solid, not even the glass of the tank, as their sense of touch is also very strong. This is not a particularly colourful fish, being a yellowish-pale pink with colourless fins.

The new Blind Cave Fishes are so small that they have been put in a separate tank from the adults until they have grown sufficiently to mix with them.

We have acquired about a dozen young Lemon Tetras (*Hyphessobrycon pulchripinnis*). These will grow to a maximum of 1½ in. This is a peaceful little fish and very active in the tank. The stripes on the dorsal and anal fins are a bright lemon colour and can look quite attractive. In the wild these fishes grow to about 2 in.

A number of Beacon Fish (*Hemigrammus ocellifer*) have been purchased. This is one of the Tetras, and it originates from the Amazon. It is an ideal community fish.

Beacon Fishes have bright golden spots in the top of the eye and the base of the tail, hence their name. They are also referred to as Head or Tail Light Fishes. In the males of this species the leading rays of the anal fin develop a hook, and this catches in nets when the fishes are caught. When taking these fishes out of the nets, care should be taken as the fin and even the body could be torn.

We have some new Cardinal Tetras (*Cheirodon axeirodi*). These originate from Rio Nigro in South America, where they grow to about $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. in length. Cardinal Tetras have blue-green and red colouring, and have not long been kept in aquaria. They have proved very difficult to spawn, but owing to their brilliant colouring they are ideal for the aquarium and make a good show. They are shy fishes except when in a tank with their own species.

Off-show we have about a dozen Harlequin Fishes (*Rasbora heteromorpha*) and these are in quarantine. They originate from the Malay Peninsula, S.E. Asia, where they are to be found in great numbers, both sexes growing to about $1\frac{3}{4}$ in. In a shoal, the males usually stand out with their brighter colours, and they have slightly slimmer profiles. The Harlequin is a rosy-orange colour, and covering the rear part of its body is a very distinctive blue-black triangle-shaped wedge. The eyes are a quite remarkable red. When in breeding condition the bodies of these fishes develop a violet sheen.

The female Harlequin Fish lays adhesive eggs on the undersides of broad leaves, three or four at a time; the male follows her, fertilising the eggs. The process continues periodically until there are about 100 eggs. The young hatch after twenty-four hours and they should then be given very small particles of food. These fishes are always in demand, and large quantities are imported regularly.

We have had a Leeri Gourami (*Trichogaster leeri*) for some time, and have recently purchased about a dozen of these. This is the most beautiful of the Gouramis and originates from S.E. Asia, its distribution being Thailand, Sumatra and the Malay Peninsula. Its body is covered with small shining dots, sometimes over-shot with orange-red, and the body colour resembles mother of pearl. The dorsal fin of the male is more pointed than that of the female, and both male and female are not sexually mature until fully grown at about $3\frac{1}{2}/4$ in. Leeri Gourami breed easily, the male building a large bubble-nest, and caring for the eggs and the young. The males are slightly aggressive at breeding time, but on the whole these are peaceful fishes.

Some Black Axolotls (*Ablystoma mexicanum*) have been bred

in the larval stage. These fishes are reported to be endangered but we breed hundreds every year.

We have acquired about a dozen African Knife Fishes (*Xenomystus nigri*), and these originate from North Africa, their distribution being the upper tributaries of the Nile to Liberia. They are easily recognisable because they completely lack a dorsal fin and the ventral fins are greatly reduced—they are in fact minute. These fishes are not a very attractive colour, being mouse-grey to brown, sometimes with black longitudinal stripes—their undersides often being somewhat paler. When breeding, however, they are more colourful. They are very hardy, but have not yet been bred in captivity.

We had one adult White Cloud Mountain Minnow (*Tanichthys albonubes*), and have recently acquired about a dozen. These minnows originate from China, and their distribution is Canton in the White Cloud Mountain. These are very beautiful fishes. The body is a brownish colour, the dorsal and anal fins are yellow at the base, and brilliant red outside. They require frequent additions of fresh water in the tank. They spawn on plants and many pairs devour the eggs but some leave the spawn and freshly-hatched young unmolested. The young hatch after 48 hours. In adults there is a brilliant greenish or golden band, extending from the snout to the root of the tail. In the young this band has a brilliant blue-green iridescence.

A number of Red-cheeked Barbs (*Barnus orphoides*) have been donated to the zoo. We have not exhibited these for some time and they have been put in a tank with the Boney-lipped barbs (*Osteocheilus hasselle*). Their overall colour is silver, the upper sides having a greenish or brownish lustre. The flanks are an iridescent blueish colour, and there is a red blotch on the gill-cover. The young have a dark blotch at the root of the tail. The caudal fin is reddish with a deep black margin above and below. The remaining fins are red, and the iris is a brilliant red above. The distribution of the red-cheeked Barbs is Java, Borneo, Madura and Thailand.

We have not exhibited Firetail Fishes (*Rasbora petensis*) before and have purchased a few of these. They will grow to about 2 in., and at present are 1 in. in length. They originate from Thailand.

Young Tilapia Maria bred in the aquarium have now started breeding themselves. They are in a tank off-show. There are about 300-400 which we have bred recently.

Some more Dwarf Gouramis (*Colisa lalia*) have been added to the collection. These originate from India, the distribution being Bengal and Assam. The males are more colourful than the females. These fishes prefer to spawn in tanks with plenty of algae and bright light. They make a bubble-nest. This is a lovely aquarium fish, but is not very hardy as it is susceptible to disease. Its main colour is brilliant red to wine-red, with pale blue to emerald-green spots on the flanks obliquely in double rows. The whole head is a brilliant blue-green. The females are less colourful than the males.

* * *

We have acquired another Salt Water Lobster (*Homarus vulgaris*). It is very interesting to see lobsters come out of their shells and this occurs between the body and the tail, leaving the whole of the old shell intact. They are a much brighter colour when they shed their shells.

Six new Sea Horses (*Hippocampus species*) have been purchased and some of these are different from those we have already. The colours of these Sea Horses are black, white and yellow. Sea Horses have an external skeleton and are very thin. They are salt water fishes, originating from the Indo-Pacific.

Another new Scorpion Fish (*Pterois species*) has been added to the collection, and we are now exhibiting three different species. The newest one is a much lighter colour.

Golden Pencil Fish (*Nannostomus anomalus*) have not been exhibited in the aquarium for a number of years, and we have now purchased a dozen. These fishes originate from West Guiana.

We have purchased three scavengers. They are the Sucking Loach (*Gyrinocheilus aymonieri*), Red Tail Black Sharks (*Labeo bicolor*), and Ruby Sharks (*Labeo frenatus*). These will be distributed around the various tanks as they keep the fishes and tanks clean by feeding off algae.

There are some Hatchet Fish (*Labuca labuca*) in the aquarium, and we have now acquired some more of a different type. These fishes originate from India.

* * *

Mr. P. W. Gallup, who was our Head Gardener for nearly twenty-four years, has now retired, due mainly to ill health. He will be greatly missed by our visitors, and we wish him a long and happy retirement.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

New readers of the CHESTER ZOO NEWS who would like to receive the magazine regularly may be interested to know that subscription forms can be obtained from the souvenir shops. An annual subscription (12 issues) costs £2.00, postage paid, which can either be handed over the counter at the shops or posted with the completed form to the Director-Secretary, Chester Zoo, Chester.



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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