

"Our Zoo News"

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

Price 2d.

Annual Subscription 3/0 post free.

NUMBER FORTY-TWO.



Photo by G. W. Ellis, Esq.

A picturesque scene of the American Bison with calf in Chester Zoo

We have at last got through our third winter. many times we wondered when the snow and frost was going to leave us and the animals must have thought the same for often they would look dejected

as one dull day followed another.

Fortunately we have had very few deaths during this last winter and in most of these cases it was old age which was the principal cause.

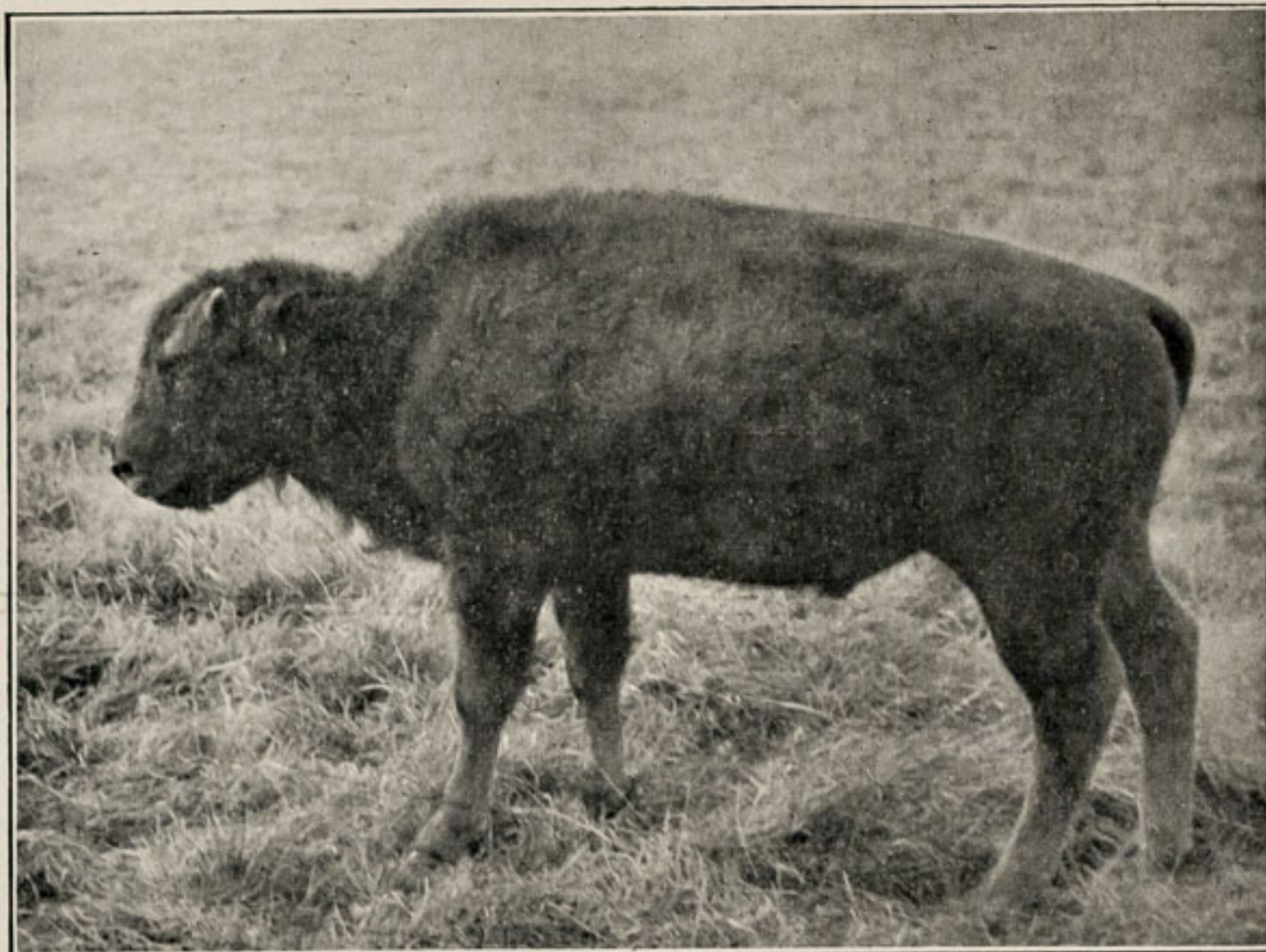


Photo by G. W. Ellis, Esq.

"BILLY." A young American Bison, born in Chester Zoo, 16th May, 1941

There is no doubt that this season's great attraction will be Peter and Victor; although not by any means an isolated case certainly many people have never seen a dog and lion living in perfect harmony together and they create quite a lot of attention from the visitors.

They are a pretty sight as they sit side by side on the platform in their cage or enjoy a rollicking game together, but it is their very deep attachment to each other which appeals so much to the stranger.

Most people ask how this strange friendship came about, so for their benefit we will record the story of their introduction. Peter is a cross between a smooth-haired terrier and a sealyham terrier and was given to a girl at the Zoo to take the place of Jet, a very small terrier who met her death under very tragic circumstances in the winter of 1940-1. She was a wonderful ratter and would face any odds in her constant war against these vermin which are always a zoo's problem.

One morning she heard someone shout that they could see a rat; at once Jet was on the scene and a chase took place, the rat turned into the Lion House and bolted into a lion cage closely followed by Jet who was at once pounced upon by a lion.

Although the lion was made to drop her the shock and wounds were too much for her small body and she died leaving a blank place particularly in the girl's life, for they were very devoted to one another.

It was to try and compensate to some extent for this loss that Peter was given to the girl, but being only a puppy his affections were very divided and he became a pal with everyone, very much unlike Jet who gave undivided loyalty to her mistress.

When Peter was about six months old, Victor the young lion came to the Zoo with his brother Valentine and sister Valerie; Valerie soon afterwards left to become a regimental mascot, and Victor and Valentine settled down to grow up, as the Zoo hoped, to become stock lions of the future. Unfortunately Valentine seriously hurt himself whilst dashing across his cage and as nothing could be done to ease his suffering he was put to sleep.

Victor was lonely and cried piteously for his mate and it was while we were trying to comfort him that Peter came up and we introduced them; at first the lion was suspicious but Peter was very insistent on making friends and finally persuaded the lion to let him lick him.



Photo by G. S. Mottershead

"COYPU." A rodent from South America which makes its home in river banks. The undercoat which is called Neutria is used commercially making coats, etc.

The following day we again let Peter into the lion cage and after a little while Peter managed to induce Victor to play but when the time came to separate them it was obvious each was sorry to lose the other.

As Victor cried so when Peter left we decided to let Peter join him early the following morning, but when the dog was allowed out about noon for a run he very soon returned and wanted to rejoin his strange companion; by the end of the following day Peter decided to take up his permanent quarters with Victor where he has lived ever since, sharing the same bed and feeding together in perfect harmony.

Peter is let out daily for exercise and often comes to his old place by the fire, but if anyone should say "I wonder what Victor is doing" he at once jumps up and goes to see if his pal is alright; the re-union is a real pleasure to witness and Victor settles down with an air of contentment.

Visitors will find many of their old favourites still anxious to welcome them once more. Cocky still shouts to all and sundry "Come 'ere, Come 'ere," and becomes very excited if you decide to go and have a chat with him. "Shake hands with Cocky" will be his next request, but visitors are advised to let him put his foot out and not their finger in the cage for they might receive a nasty bite and all Cocky will do is laugh and then try and catch someone else.

As the feeding problem is likely to become more serious it has been decided to cultivate more land than ever this year and if sufficient labour can be procured every available piece of land will be called upon to produce something. VISITORS will greatly help if they will refrain from and restrain others from damaging any growing crops.

Although the Aquarium has lost some of its most notable fish it still has an interesting collection, and when natural food becomes available once more as the warm days arrive it is hoped breeding operations will commence in most of the tanks.

There are still a few Angel Fish to be found in the original tank where they were placed just over six years ago, in fact there are a few inhabitants of the aquarium which have lived there now for over five years.

Sally, Teeny and Roger, the three Malayan Bears will perhaps more than any other animal welcome the warm summer; although they come from a tropical climate they stand our winters very well, considering they are completely out of doors in all weathers and have certainly not been able to get the food to which they had been used to, they have come through these last three bad winters remarkably well.

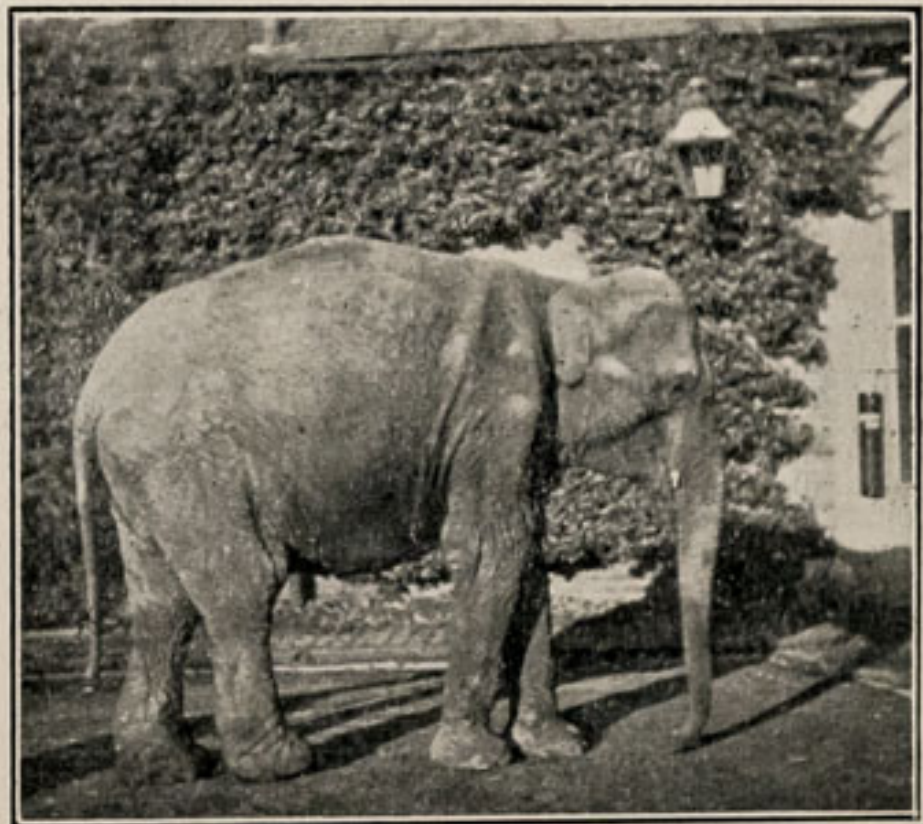


Photo by G. S. Mottershead.

"MOLLY." Female Singalese Elephant, aged 11 years. Deposited at Chester Zoo for the duration of the war.



Photo by G. W. Ellis, Esq.

"MARTIAL EAGLE." A very handsome Eagle from Africa

We had hoped that we would have been able to commence Elephant Rides this Easter, but owing to the severe shortage of staff we shall not be able to have all arrangements completed, but we hope to have the elephant working in this capacity before Whitsuntide.

It is with regret that we have to record the death of Big-Boy, the popular Chimpanzee. It will be remembered that Big-Boy suffered from asthma which troubled him very badly at times but he was always

cheerful and although at times he could hardly breathe he was always very active.

Although this winter had been so bad Big-Boy had kept better than he had the two previous winters and his attacks of asthma had been less frequent filling us with hope that he was going to out-grow this distressing complaint. However almost on the first day which showed signs of the winters end he contracted a cold which turned to pneumonia and, as on other occasions when he was really ill he refused to take anything and he died within a very short while.

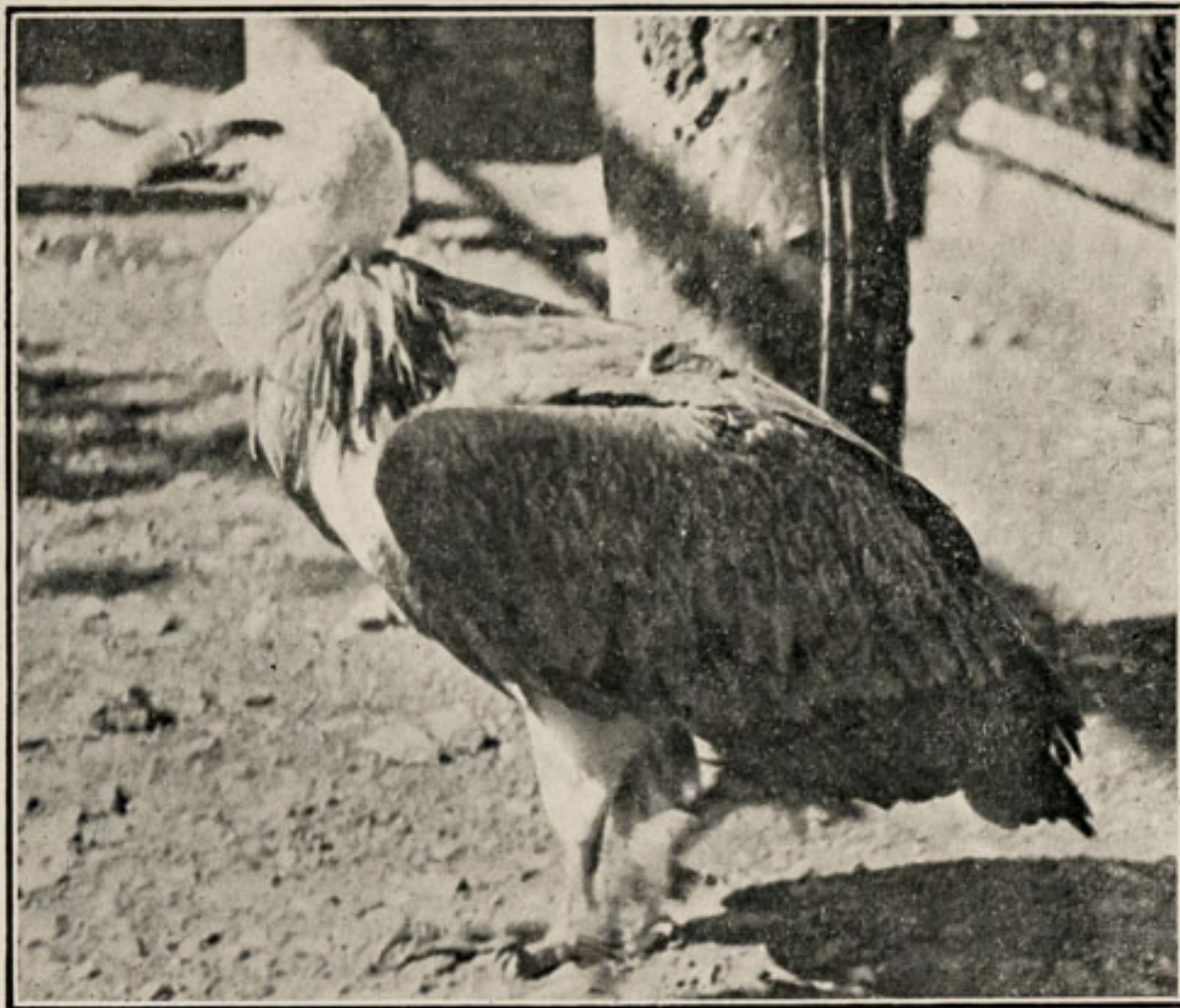


Photo by H. F. Parker, Esq.

"YOUNG GRIFFON VULTURE." Bred in Chester Zoo, 1940.

This is the only record of the Griffon being bred in captivity. Two articles have been published on this rare event; one in the "Field" of 1st March, 1941, and the other in the "Avicultural Magazine," Sept.-Oct., 1941

FREE DRAW RESULT.

The Free Draw which was run in connection with the advance sale of Zoo Admission Tickets proved a greater success than ever before.

The First Leopard Skin was won by:—

Mrs. H. Bridger, The Cottage, Vyner Road, Bidston, with ticket No. 129.

The Second Leopard Skin was won by:—

Mr. T. Arden, Brereton Park, Huxley, Near Chester, with ticket No. 2766.

The amount raised by the sale of these tickets was just over £83.

The young bull Bison which was born last May has grown into a very fine beast, full of life and adventure and has taught his parents a thing or two.

Ever since the old pair were turned into the large field they have been extremely docile and made no attempt to get out, but young Billy has developed a roving spirit and to make matters worse he entices his parents to follow him.

At first we treated the matter as a joke, but as time went on we realised that Billy was making a shocking mess of the fences which he had charged full on; his first method was to stand several feet away, then lower his head and charge at the fence with all the weight he could muster.

However he must have got tired of this method of obtaining his liberty for he now prances up to the fence like a well trained horse and jumps it. Now his father does likewise, and one can well imagine how a certain person felt when walking down the Central Drive one day and hearing some animal coming up behind, turned, thinking it was a White Bahrein

Donkey, but to his amazement found it was the large bull Bison in a very uncertain mood. We might just as well admit it, more than one member of the staff was chased before the old bull was finally led to his own domain.

It was obvious from the start the bull was not in too pleasant a mood for he pawed the ground, then with lowered head made a sudden run at us, we dodged round a tree and he missed but he returned and charged again and this went on for some time till we got tired so a new method was thought out; this was, that one of us should be chased in earnest and should make for the field where the Bison should be, once inside the field there were one or two ways of dodging him, the main thing was to run fast enough and hope for the best which we are pleased to say came off.

There is every appearance that there is another young Bison on the way again this year, what young Billy will think about it we do not know for he is still his mother's baby.

Billy and a female Tahr have become great pals and both seem to enjoy breaking out together, and when being chased back make a very amusing picture when they reach the fence which borders their field; the Tahr which is a reputed jumper, looks for a gap to run through, while Billy who one would expect to do likewise simply measures the height and jumps it.

Bristol Zoo.

Reported by A. E. Greed, Esq.

Although we escaped the exceptionally heavy falls of snow which many parts of the country experienced during the Winter we, nevertheless, found the prolonged spell of severe weather very trying in many ways. Our losses in birds during this time were heavy, but, fortunately, the animals came through well and it is interesting to record that two Rhesus Monkeys were born in the Temple—one when it was extremely cold. These youngsters are a tremendous source of interest to their five cousins which were also born in the Temple two years ago.

Two Arctic Foxes recently deposited by the Zoological Society of London are very attractive and were soon "adopted" by kind friends, and another new arrival—a fine male Llama—is undoubtedly going to be a favourite with our younger visitors.

"Alfred," our Gorilla, continues to thrive and does not appear to have lost weight despite the absence of fruit and many other good things to which he was accustomed in happier times.

It is very gratifying to us to learn from many members of H.M. Forces (who are, of course, admitted at a reduced fee) that they consider themselves extremely fortunate in having such a delightful spot in which to meet their relatives and friends—especially on Sundays.

London and Whipsnade Zoo.

Reported by Dr. G. M. Veevers.

Despite war time difficulties, there will still be a good show of animals for Easter visitors. Among recent arrivals in the London Zoo is a Barbary Ape, the gift of H.E. The Governor of Gibraltar. She comes from the colony which is kept at Gibraltar and makes a very welcome recruit to the Monkey House, as her predecessor "Jacko" died recently after having lived in the Zoo for many years. Another interesting arrival is a young Reindeer which was presented to a Unit of the Royal Navy by a Unit of the Soviet Fleet and was brought home and deposited in the Gardens. She is also a very welcome arrival as her species had not been represented in the collection since the beginning of the war. Twin white goats have been born—the first Zoo babies of 1942—and there will probably be more by Easter. In 1936 a number of white goats from the Royal Herd in Windsor Park were received and they have produced young ones each year since then.

The main attraction at Whipsnade at Easter will probably be the seven Brown Bear cubs born last January. There are also a number of Husky Dog puppies and by March or April there should be one or two additions to the fine herd of Bactrian Camels. Whipsnade, too, is lucky in having the famous Giant Panda "Ming," who was evacuated from London

because of the "Blitz." They also have all the Zoo Elephants there, as the old Elephant House at the London Zoo was pulled down to make place for a new building and the war has made it impossible for this work to be carried on. The Elephants are probably the most-missed animals at the London Zoo, but there is no suitable temporary accommodation for them and they are safer and happier at Whipsnade.

The War-time Utility Exhibition, which has been such a success at the London Zoo during the past two summers, will be in full swing again this year and visitors will be able to see exhibits of rabbits, poultry, bees and allotments. One of the Allotments is to be planted entirely with seeds given by American friends through the National Allotments Committee. At the end of May it is hoped to hold a big poultry show and auction sale in aid of the Red Cross. Last year a similar show was held and nearly £1,000 was raised for the Red Cross. This year we hope to do even better.

Maidstone Zoo Park.

Reported by Sir Garrard Tyrwhitt-Drake.

This Zoo re-opens for its 9th season on March 22nd.

Mr. Richard Hearne, the well-known actor is to perform the opening ceremony.

What a Winter it has been, and one that would have been very trying in normal times, frost for weeks on end, but with the additional trial of food shortage, and often unsuitable at that, it has been extra difficult. Losses in consequence have been considerable, but not many more than the toll of Winter under ordinary conditions, and I am glad to say the stock is still numerous and varied, and there will be hardly, if any, empty cages.

Several additions have been received, including monkeys, young bears, a leopard, cranes and aquatic birds.

The only births since the last report include a Zebu, several Lambs, Wallaby and Badgers.

It is difficult to say, with the constantly changing National position, what sort of a Season the 1942 one will turn out, but I venture to think it will be as good, if not a little better, than 1941, though the fresh petrol restrictions may very considerably affect it.



Photo by G. W. Ellis, Esq.

A group of Chester Zoo Lionesses—"Cassandra," "Coral," "Cordelia" and "Roxana"

The following table shows the results of the
experiments conducted during the year 1911.
The first column shows the number of plants
used in each experiment, and the second
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