

“Our Zoo News”

A MONTHLY CHRONICLE OF NEWS OF
CHESTER ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS.

Price 2d.

Annual Subscription 3/0 post free.

NUMBER THIRTY-SEVEN.



“PATRICK”

The father of all the Lion Cubs which are now in the Zoo. He came from Dublin Zoo in March 1939 and was born about 10 years ago.

The Month goes by.

Owing to many war time contingencies it is not always possible to publish “Our Zoo News” at regular intervals, therefore until further notice it will be recognised by numbers only, and not by the month of publication.

Weather and labour problems have held up some of the alterations and developments which are being undertaken, mainly with a view to economising on the running of the Zoo, but it

is hoped that some of these will be completed by Easter.

The greatest alteration will be the transferring of the Tahr, and the Bahrein White Donkeys, to the new land which was recently incorporated in the Zoo, and to which the Bison have already been moved.

The enclosures so vacated will be turned over to the cultivation of various feeding stuffs for the animals, whilst at the same time it will give the enclosures a rest.

To assist visitors in identifying the position of the numerous exhibits, it is proposed to name the various walks and drives, and this in conjunction with the numbered arrow system at present in operation, should facilitate the finding of any particular exhibit.

Upon entering the Zoo the drive at once divides, one part leading to the Malayan Sun Bears, which we propose to call South Drive, the other which turns right and passes the Cafes, Central Drive.

After passing the Aquarium this drive will be known as East Avenue, and it continues to the road on the east side of the Zoo.

Opposite the Polar Bear Enclosure, a new Avenue has been made and planted with trees through the field, and proceeds for something like two hundred yards until it reaches the "Donkey's Nest." This Avenue will be referred to as Bison Walk, as it will lead principally to the Bison.

The "Donkey's Nest" is a fairly large ravine, well wooded. How it originally came by its name we cannot say, but it has been so called by the local people long before the Zoo came into existence. Eventually a walk will be made round this which will bring visitors to the extreme end of East Drive.

Opposite where this walk will end is another walk through the Bird Sanctuary to be known as Wild Bird Walk. This will bring visitors close to the lawns in front of the Cafes.

We feel that by having names for the principal roadways in the Zoo it will make direction much easier for the public.

All the animals and birds are welcoming the first signs of Spring and every gleam of sunshine is taken full advantage of by all.

The birds are thinking of nesting and in some cases have commenced their family problem. A pair of Ring Necked Parraqueets have been sitting for two weeks at the time of writing these notes.

For some reason which we have been unable to define, the Griffon Vultures, after showing signs of mating in January suddenly lost interest, and it was not until the middle of March that they began to build a nest in real earnest. The egg was laid on the 19th March and we are wondering if they will repeat last year's success.

Griffon Junior, as he is referred to, is a very fine bird, equally as big as his parents, and lives amicably with them in the same aviary, but like the other vultures, is not allowed to perch near the platform which his parents have taken possession of.

Every effort is being made to re-open the Public Cafes which have been temporarily closed since last October, and we are hoping that despite the labour and food problems, that things in this direction will be running smoothly by Easter.

MEMBERS' SUBSCRIPTIONS.

There are now only 18 Members who have not sent in their Subscriptions for this year. The Society would be very pleased if they would do this as early as possible.

MEMBERS' TICKETS.

We wish to thank all Members who responded to our appeal in the last Zoo News for unused tickets for the Forces. Several batches have been despatched to the Camps, who we are pleased to say are making use of them.

NEW MEMBERS.

Through the medium of last month's News we have been successful in obtaining several new Members, and to them we offer a hearty welcome and hope that they will spend and enjoy many happy hours at the Zoo during the coming months.

APPLICATION FORM FOR MEMBERSHIP.

Although details of this were outlined in our previous issue we publish again these facts for the benefit of prospective Members.

For the duration of the war we are waiving the first year's subscription of one guinea. As this is a special war time scheme Members would not be called upon to pay this at some future date.

By paying one guinea entrance fee a person becomes a Member of the North of England Zoological Society and in return receives a Member's card admitting him or her to the Zoo on any day throughout the year.

The following year when the annual subscription of one guinea is paid, Members would receive in addition to their Member's Card, twenty admission tickets for distribution among friends.

To those readers interested, we urge you to take advantage of this scheme now. The better weather lies ahead when many enjoyable visits can be paid to the Zoo. A copy of each Zoo News issued will be sent free of charge. Refreshments can be obtained if desired in the Members' Lounge which is comfortably furnished and the scene of many cosy and informal chats, whilst the various exhibits in the Zoo are a source of great interest and amusement at all times.

Even in war time people must have a little relaxation. What better way could there be than spending an hour or two at the Zoo, either looking at the collection or resting quietly in the Members' Lounge. Enjoy these privileges by becoming a Member NOW.

The Application Form is very simple to fill in. Post it with your guinea to—The Secretary, The North of England Zoological Society, Zoological Gardens, Upton-by-Chester.

THE OCELET (*Felis Pardalis*).

One of the most striking of all the Cats is the Ocelot, which comes from South America. It is most beautifully marked and its skin is in great demand for making up into various articles of wearing apparel.

Generally speaking one would not call the Ocelot a savage animal, in fact it can be tamed and treated as our own domestic cat. Nevertheless it is capable of inflicting considerable damage if so inclined.

Its food consists of small mammals and birds and it is a very heavy feeder, taking far more in proportion than a Leopard to keep it in condition.

In size it is considerably smaller than a Leopard but its agility is equally as good, being capable of making great leaps and is an excellent climber.

The specimen at the Zoo came to us in May 1938 and is an acquisition to the collection. "Thomas" is one of the animals adopted under our Adoption Scheme and is well known to the many visitors.

Life at the Zoo—3.

By one of the Staff.

This is my third contribution to the Zoo News and I must confess, for several minutes I was at a loss to begin. There seemed to be so many things to write about that I hardly knew just where to commence, but I think the

most notable event of February was the arrival of the first snowdrops.

These little flowers were to be found singly and in greater numbers about the grounds. Growing in clusters at the foot of trees, along borders, or lurking in the most out of the way places. Nobly fulfilling their task of conveying that Spring was on its way.

Those who have not worked in a Zoo at some time or another, cannot fully appreciate how eagerly animal and worker look forward to the Spring and the promise of warmer days to come—even the Polar Bears.

When trudging through the snow from cage to cage, half frozen with the cold, one thinks longingly of Summer, if only for the animals' sake. We, of course, can get a hot meal and sit in front of a fire when the day's work is over, but not so the animals.

Nature however looks after her own by providing a thicker coat to meet the Winter, for the cold weather does not appear to trouble them too much. This is best illustrated by the Malayan Sun Bears. No greater contrast could be made than in the warm sunny weather to which they were accustomed, and our Winter. Yet, they were as lively and full of mischief when the snow was several inches deep in their enclosure, as on the hottest day in Summer.

Providing an animal receives regular attention in the way of food and water, and adequate protection from the elements, it seldom takes harm and gets through the winter quite well, but Spring is the season when everything seems to take on a new lease of life and it is, therefore, welcomed by them all.

For the past week or two the rooks have been very busy building their nests in the trees at the entrance to the Zoo. One gets used to their raucous quarrelling and it is very interesting to watch them strutting about the ground, or carrying twigs in their beaks, then flying off in a round about way to continue with the more serious task of building a nest.

A number of Moor Hens who used to pass their days by the duck pond now spend their time either walking about the Bison Field or in the Crowned Crane Enclosure.

One I noticed, was hopping about on one leg—the other being tucked up. It was not broken but I was unable to get near enough to see the injury, and do not know what caused it. All efforts to catch it only seemed to distress the little thing, and it seemed kindest to leave

it alone as it did not appear to be in pain. The only thing that could be done was to see that it did not suffer from hunger as a result of its injury, and it now seems to be making good progress.

From a Moor Hen to a Leopard. A world of difference between them but both having something in common—a leg injury.

“Renee,” the Leopardess, has aroused quite a number of comments lately on account of her limping around the cage. In fact one visitor reported at the Pay-box on his way out that the “Cheetah” had hurt her paw and was rolling in agony. This, of course, was incorrect as it was only “Renee’s” way of showing how pleased she was with life in general, but you may like to hear the whole story of how she hurt it.

I happened to be passing the Leopard House one night when I heard a great commotion going on inside. Anything unusual, however slight, must be investigated at once, so I gingerly opened the door and peered into the gloom. For a moment I could see nothing, but heard a great deal of noise which I took to be caused by the male and female fighting over a bone.

By this time I had got used to the darkness and could dimly make out the two leopardesses close to the wire dividing the cages, when I suddenly realised that the whole of “Renee’s” foreleg was pushed through into the adjoining cage and the other leopardess was biting it.

Renee’s” roars and frantic efforts to get free seemed to shake the whole cage and for a moment I felt like running away, but one never does that in a Zoo, no matter what happens, and I grabbed at a bucket of water and threw it over the attacker. This had not the slightest effect as it nearly all went over me.

I then picked up an iron bar which I had noticed earlier in the day was reared against the wall, and attacked the Leopardess through the bars. The suddenness and fierceness of my onslaught took it by surprise and it turned its head with a snarl. “Renee” snatched at the opportunity of getting away and I then managed to get her shut in a cage by herself in case she vented her temper on the male leopard, as she was simply furious.

For several days she seemed to fret over the fact that she was the vanquished one, and this knowledge seemed to upset her far more than her wound. She even refused to eat and if I

went anywhere near she would snarl viciously and seemed to blame me for the incident, which was very disappointing. One would have thought that she would have been at least grateful.

However, I think that she has now forgiven me as she purrs and rolls all over the floor when I come in sight, and on occasions graciously permits me to tickle her with one finger, through the wire netting.

Her leg has now healed although she still hops on three. I have seen her use it when she has thought no one has been looking, but she apparently gets more fuss made of her than before, so I expect it pays her to limp.

An unusual incident occurred the other day when one of the female Nutrea burrowed underground into the next cage which contained a Martial Hawk Eagle. Before anything could be done the Eagle, a very powerful bird, had pounced on it, killed it and then proceeded to devour it. The other female Nutrea nearly suffered the same fate, if it had not been for one of the Keepers happening to notice it and chasing it back through the hole each time it ventured forth, until further assistance came.

It was hardly the right moment to enter the cage as the Eagle was getting rather furious at the sight of his dinner behaving in such a tantalising manner, so the Nutrea had to be dug out of the ground from the outside and then the tunnel filled in.

As these animals are in an enclosure of concrete, it was rather surprising to think that they had burrowed right underneath it.

After the recent narrow escape from death related in the last Zoo News, the three smallest lion cubs were kept inside, but they had an amusing habit of disappearing, much to the amazement of visitors.

When they looked the first time the cage would contain four occupants. Their attention would be claimed by something else and when they looked back again only the mother, “Faith,” remained in the cage. This was very mystifying but the explanation was quite simple. The Cubs would slide through a small aperture and under the floor boards of the cage, where they would sometimes remain for hours, occasionally peeping through the gap.

At first "Faith" was very worried over these babies of hers, who always seemed to be taking part in some escapade or another, and would call to them to come out, but youth is ever thoughtless where mother love is concerned and poor "Faith" would beseech them in vain. When they did decide to come out they would run to her and rub their heads against her body, uttering funny little growls as much as to say, "Don't worry about us, we are only exploring."

"Faith" got used to her vanishing cubs, but as it wasted such a lot of time when cleaning operations were in progress and they had to be transferred from one cage to another, the hole was boarded up, and in any case the growing cubs were in danger of getting stuck. It was not an uncommon sight to see two little legs and a tail waving in the air, whilst a muffled growl for help came floating from the regions below.

I was returning from a visit home one night when coming up the drive there was a crashing of shrubs and something brushed against my shoulder. I must admit I was a little startled and did not wait to see what it was, for with the only weapon in my hand—a pot of marmalade—I struck out with considerable force. Fortunately I missed, as it happened to be the Marabou Stork who had popped his beak over the top of the enclosure, and in the dark I had wandered rather close to it. Had I found my mark I feel sure that the Stork would have been no more, and it is rather hard to say which would have upset me the most. The loss of the Marabou or the loss of the marmalade.

A very tiny visitor was in the Lion House with her mother a day or two ago when the Lions commenced to roar. The noise was quite considerable, but all the little girl said was, "Don't c'y, Marg'et will love you," which was the last remark I ever expected to hear from such a small child.

The telephone rang one morning and on answering it we were informed that "Dolly," the popular little pony, had been seen walking down the road, the gate having been left open by one of the tradesmen.

"Dolly" was nowhere in sight, but running down a by-road I found her looking rather bewildered and surrounded by a number of small children. She came trotting up when she saw

me, and I feel sure she was relieved to see someone she knew, for she walked at my side without question. She aroused quite a small amount of interest on the way back, and someone even went so far as to ask if I was taking the dog out for a walk. Perhaps this remark upset "Dolly" for she refused to walk anywhere but in the middle of the road, and it took me all my time to push her on to the side to allow a bus to pass. However, she seemed very pleased to arrive safely back at the Zoo where she can roam at will with no fear of traffic.

Whether it is because Spring is in the air or not, I cannot say, but the Bison seem very playful lately. Apart from the fact that they are frequently seen careering around their enclosure, the Bull was found kicking a log of wood around the field, then tossing it into the air with his horns. He seemed to be thoroughly enjoying himself and this new game kept him entertained for quite a while.

I was very amused one afternoon when in the Pay-box to overhear some visitors going out, pass the remark that mine must be most uninteresting and dull job. Far from it, for apart from the work itself being interesting, hardly a day passes without something or other cropping up.

I was having my tea one evening when the young girl keeper informed me that the Bison had got into the next field which had just been newly planted with an avenue of trees, and that they were doing their best to undo all the good work that had been done.

There was not a moment to waste, and we both rushed off to the field to discover that the Piebald Sheep were also assisting in the demolition work.

The question was, how had they got into the field and how to get them out. The first part was quickly answered—the barbed wire by the pond was lying in the water—but the other was not so easily solved. One cannot just walk up to a Bull Bison, pat him on the back and tell him to go back into his own enclosure—at least I have never been able to do so.

The only thing was to coax them through, so with an armful of hay each we walked towards the Bison, who then commenced to amble towards us. This pace did not last long how-

ever, for "Nellie," the Cow Bison, started to charge us at a good speed, and there was only one thing to do, and that was to run—in the other direction.

Unfortunately we were badly hampered with mud, caused by the pond overflowing and the Bison churning the ground up when going for a drink. In places we were nearly knee deep in slush and our rubber boots were in danger of being left behind.

The mud was no deterrent to "Nellie," and she came thundering towards us, but I think we broke all records for running, and just managed to fling ourselves under the barbed wire. Our troubles were not over, for we were both hooked. I was lying flat on the ground and

managed to extricate myself without much damage, but the young keeper who had crawled through backwards was on all fours and appeared to be having a ripping time, judging by the condition of her coat.

What did it matter that the chasers were chased. We had done what we set out to do and there only remained the gap to be filled up, so while the Bison were occupied with some hay, we fixed this up temporarily and repaired the damage done to the young trees, which incidentally looked as though a steam roller had been passed over them.

No, I should never say that my present job was dull and uninteresting.



GRIFFIN VULTURE

One of the Griffin Vultures which successfully reared a young one last year (a full account of this appeared in the "Field" on March 1st).

Application Form for Membership.

Full Name
(in block letters)

Address

Occupation

Signature

I desire to join the North of England Zoological Society as a (place X opposite the form of Membership desired).

Founder.
Benefactor.
Patron.
Life Member.

Full particulars can be obtained from the Secretary.

Annual Member (1). One Guinea.
Annual Member (2). Two Guineas.

Members will receive Member's Admission Card.
Members will receive Member's Admission Card and
Twenty Admission Tickets for friends.

Proposed by

Seconded by

The Secretary will be pleased to make all necessary arrangements for the Proposer and Seconder when form is returned if this has not already been filled in.

Recommendation Form.

I suggest the following persons for Membership in the North of England Zoological Society.

Name

Address

.....
Name

Address

.....
Name

Address

.....
Signed