

*By Courtesy of J. Whitworth*

# Chester Zoo News

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

November, 1962

Price 1/-

## Introduction

We would like to thank all readers who have taken the trouble to write and give us their opinion of "Chester Zoo News" and also those who have made helpful suggestions. Your letters are very much appreciated.

Chester Zoo is very proud of the fact that its Director Secretary, Mr. George S. Mottershead, has been elected President of the International Union of Directors of Zoological Gardens for a three year term of office. As this issue goes to press, Mr. Mottershead has just left to attend the Annual Conference of the Union, in San Diego, California. Already we are looking forward to next years Conference, which will be held in Chester.

We wish to thank the following for permission to use the photographs included in this issue:—

The Daily Herald  
E. Kirkland, Esq.  
Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby  
J. Whitworth, Esq.  
G. F. Williams, Esq.

*COVER: Our Cover Picture this month shows one of Chester Zoo's young Crocodiles obligingly 'smiling' for the camera.*

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## INTRODUCING A FEW MEMBERS OF THE NOCTURNAL HOUSE

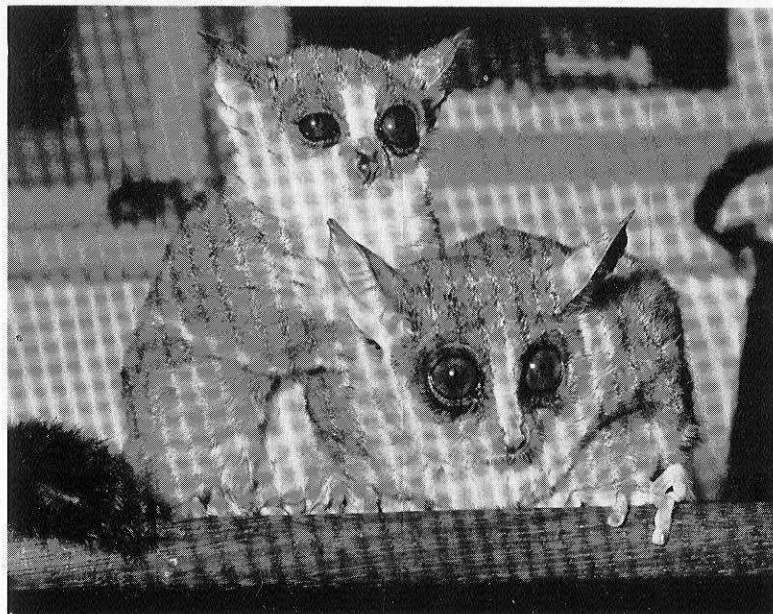
The Nocturnal House was first opened to visitors during Easter, 1958. It contains twelve glass-fronted cages and in these a series of Nocturnal Animals are continuously displayed. To simulate moonlight conditions the House is kept in darkness—only the cages being dimly lit—and the animals can be seen moving about freely. During our night, bright lights are switched on in the cages and the animals retire to sleep; thus their whole day and night cycle is reversed.

**BUSHBABIES:** By far the most popular of our Nocturnal animals are the Bushbabies. At present we have two species—the large Bushy-tailed Bushbabies and a much smaller variety, known as Senegal, or Moholi Bushbabies. These smaller ones come from orchard scrub and light bush country, bordering the great plains of Africa and are delightful little creatures. They enchant our visitors with their antics—leaping from branch to branch and spending much time grooming themselves and each other. One of the nails on each hind foot is elongated and specially adapted for grooming purposes.

Our Bushbabies breed quite freely in captivity—usually producing one baby at a time, though twins are not abnormal. As a general rule we keep the adult animals in pairs, but from time to time we have experimented with colonies. This is seldom successful—the males really are pugnacious little creatures and sooner or later fighting breaks out. In the wild they spend most of the day-light hours curled up in hollow trees—coming out to feed on fruit and insects, etc., at night.

One interesting thing is that should a Bushbaby knock off a portion of branch, or part of a twig, whilst jumping across its cage, it will immediately return to inspect the broken piece and also the branch from which it came. This must be an instinctive reaction, because in the wild there is every chance that rotten wood would be alive with insect life.

When forced to travel along the ground, Bushbabies do so in a series of kangaroo-like hops—negotiating obstacles skilfully and at considerable speed.



BUSHBABIES

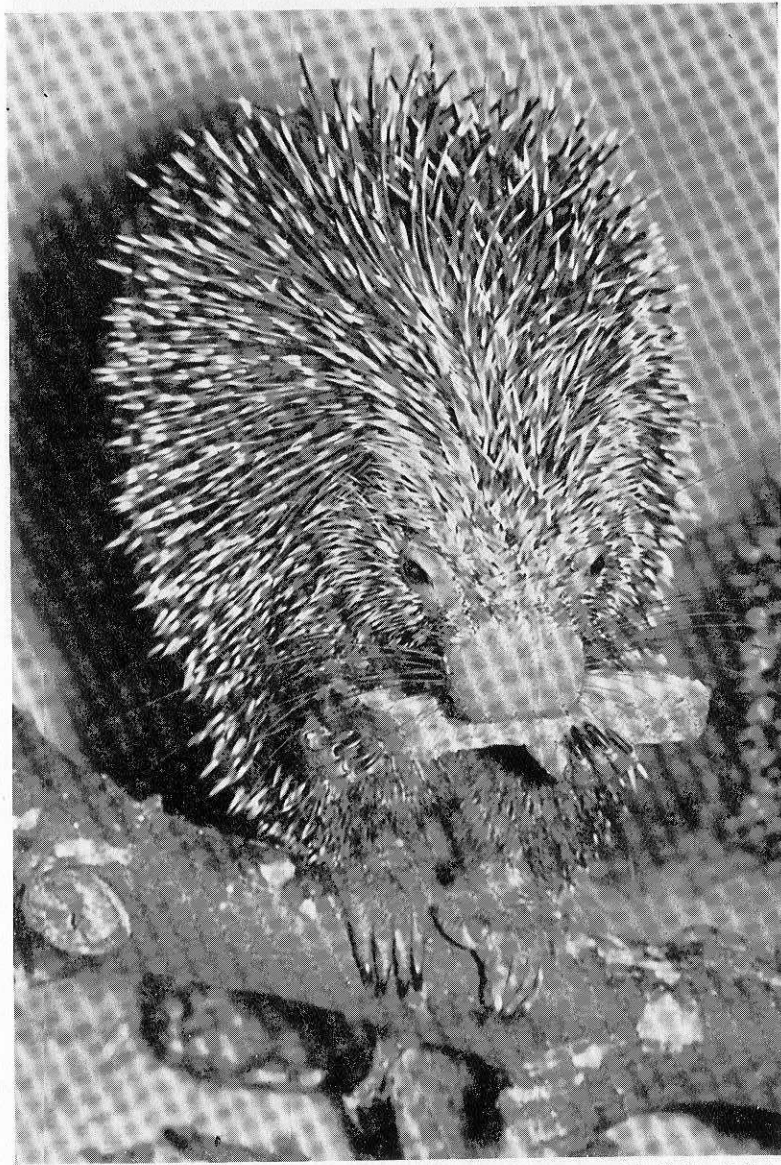
*Daily Herald*

The Bushy-tailed Bushbabies, also exhibited in the Nocturnal House, are very much larger and sturdier animals—but in habits they are very similar.

All our Bushbabies are fed on a variety of fruit, leaves, bread, cake, milk and honey, with occasional meal worms. When eating they are inclined to snatch their food with a hand—as if catching a fly—and they can, in fact, catch a fly out of the air.

**REED LEMUR:** This animal is also known as the Gentle Lemur and, as its name implies, is a markedly gentle creature. Like all true Lemurs it comes from Madagascar, where it has adapted itself to a strange mode of life—spending its time on the great floating reed beds and feeding almost exclusively upon the pith inside the bararata reeds.

To the best of our knowledge, our Reed Lemur is the only one of its kind in this country. It was discovered unexpectedly in Calcutta market, by Armand Denis, who took it back with him to Africa and kept it as a pet. He later presented it to Chester Zoo.



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

"ESMERELDA"

It is about the size of a Bushy-tailed Bushbaby and closely resembles it in its movements. It has to be supplied with grass and bamboo shoots every day and, although it bares its teeth and appears very fierce when approached, it is in fact completely tame.

The Reed Lemur is soft and furry with a round face, broad nose and small round ears and the Nocturnal House is often filled with its curious rasping call.

**ZORILLA:** This interesting animal is also known as the African Skunk. Although much smaller than the well-known American Skunk, it is somewhat similar in appearance and is also coloured black and white. It possesses very pungent scent glands at the base of the tail and, if frightened or attacked, can eject a stream of vile-smelling liquid. This defence mechanism is rarely used when the Animals are accustomed to captivity and it has never been used in Chester Zoo.

**BRAZILIAN TREE PORCUPINE:** "Esmerelda" is the oldest member of the Nocturnal House and came to us in August, 1957, having originally been brought to England as long ago as 1950. Although her fearsome quills, and large bulbous nose would seem to make her undesirable as a pet, she is in fact a great favourite.

She is the least aggressive of all our Nocturnal Animals, affectionate and completely trustworthy, although her affection has been known to lead to trouble. Before we acquired a mate for her, Esmerelda was, on occasions given a cage companion. Her quills have minute fish-hook like barbs and after snuggling close to her companion at night, considerable time has had to be spent the following morning removing the quills, unintentionally transferred to the wrong animal.

One of the most interesting things about Tree Porcupines is their prehensile tail. Many of the South American animals have prehensile tails—a portion of the underside of the end of the tail having a leathery surface which enables them to grip hold of a branch or similar object. With the Brazilian Tree Porcupines, the leathery 'pad' is on the uppermost part of the end of the tail and the tail has to curl upwards to grip. It is used mainly as a fifth limb, being twisted round a branch to balance the animal, leaving the front paws free to hold food.

Esmerelda's food in the Zoo is mainly vegetable with many branches and leaves. Like all rodents she gnaws on trees to keep her teeth in order.

### CHESTER ZOO'S LYNX CARACAL FAMILY

Our first Lynx Caracal, a fully grown male, was purchased in 1958. In 1960 we obtained a mate for him from Rotterdam Zoo. The female Lynx Caracal was then six months old.

Lynx Caracal are found in the desert scrub country of Asia and Africa—Birds and small Mammals being their main source of food. This diet is fairly easy to reproduce in captivity and our animals are fed on Rabbits, Chickens and raw meat.

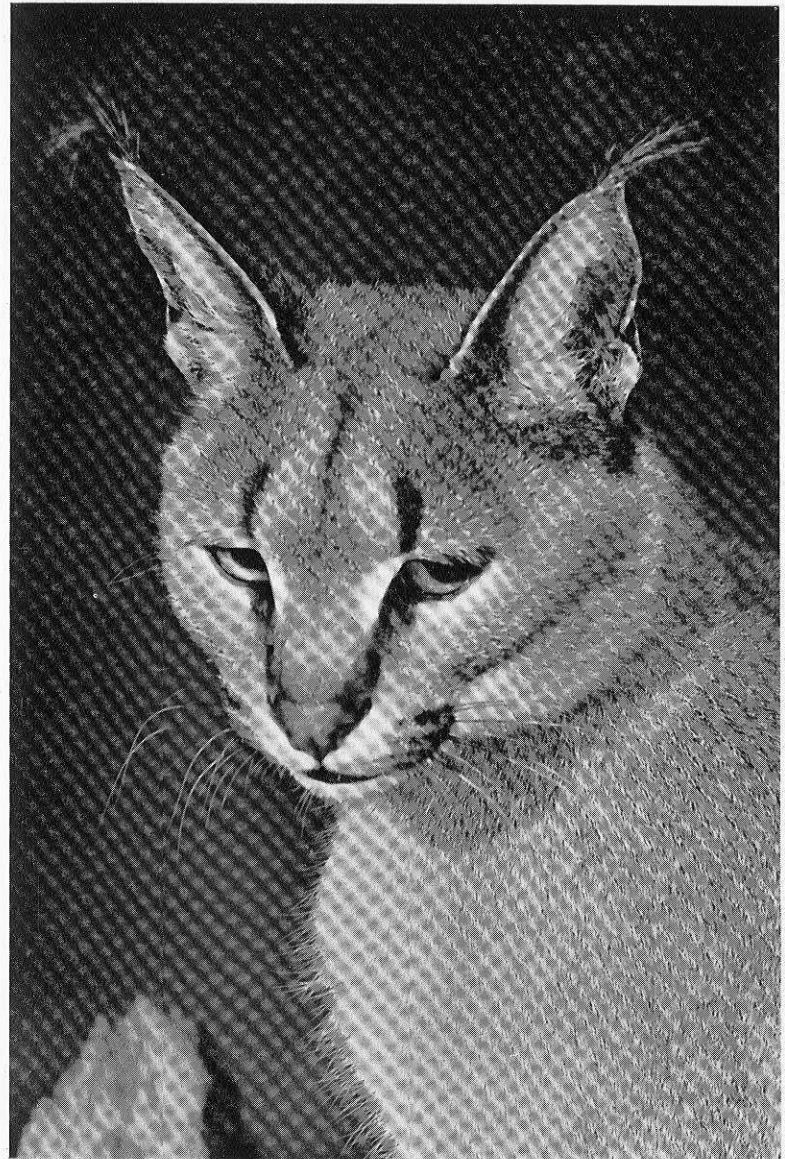
In May, 1962, Chester Zoo's first Lynx Caracal Kittens were born. "Dad" had to be removed to another enclosure to avoid any risk of his attacking the Kittens. Even when born in captivity, Lynx Caracal are virtually impossible to tame and our pair of Kittens are no exception—being absolute little spitfires.

### LATEST ARRIVALS AND PROGRESS REPORTS

In the Nocturnal house a Black Genet Kitten has been born and in the Monkey House, a Yellow Baboon. Other new babies are a delightful little Waterbuck and a Red Lechwe Calf.

The four Lion Cubs, whose arrival was reported in our last issue, are growing steadily. They will be introduced into the outside enclosure within the next few weeks.

Peter, Paul and David, the three Eland calves, are also doing well. Their horns are now about three to four inches long and will eventually grow to a length of sixteen inches or more.



*E. Kirkland*

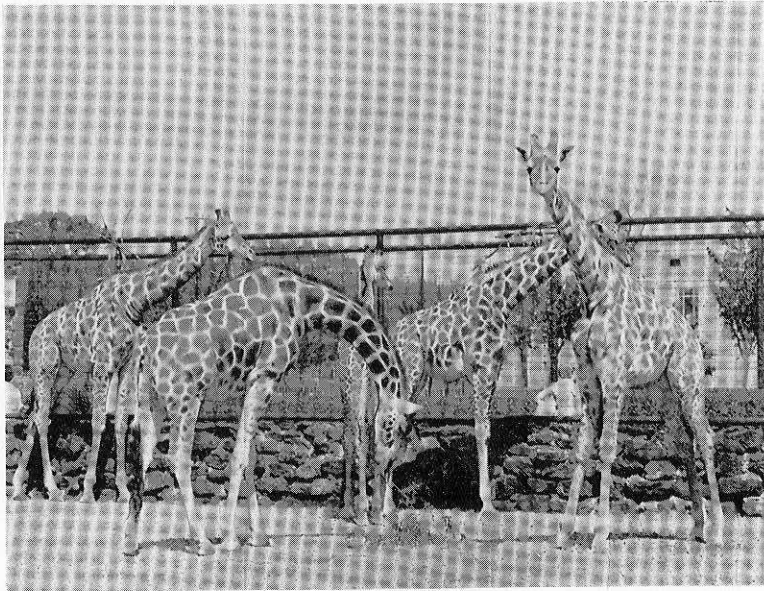
LYNX CARACAL

### WHO'S WHO IN THE GIRAFFE HOUSE

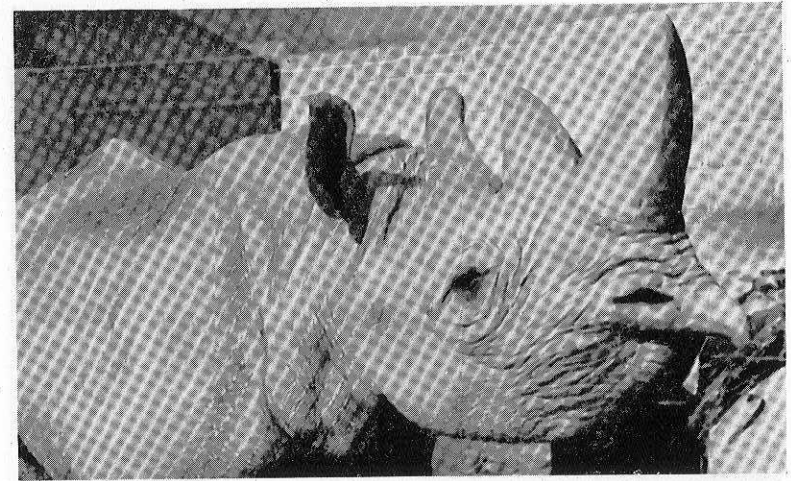
The photograph below shows Chester Zoo's complete Giraffe family. It consists of two males—"George" and "Henry" and three females—"Goofy," "Margaret" and "Debbie."

The youngest member of the group is Debbie, who was born in Africa in May, 1959. She was left by her mother when very young and had to be handreared, so it is surprising that Debbie is the least domesticated member of the group. Although she has no objection to male Keepers, she will not allow girl Keepers to enter her enclosure without first attempting to chase them out.

George, on the other hand, is completely domesticated and has a wonderfully gentle nature. Despite the dignity of his great height, he loves to be petted. So anxious is George to show his affection, that his Keepers have to take care that he does not tread on their toes. Recently George has taken to amusing himself by snatching hats from passing visitors. He obviously does this purely from a sense of fun, because he makes no attempt to chew the stolen hat—merely dropping it again once he has had his joke.



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby



G. F. Williams

"ROGER"

### THE RHINO HOUSE

When the Rhinos were first introduced into their outside enclosures, we noticed that their colouring blended rather too well with the sandstone of the House. To show the Animals to better advantage, part of the outside of the Rhino House has now been plastered with red oxide cement.

In our last two issues considerable space has been given to the Square-lipped, or White, Rhinoceros and no mention has been made of the two other members of the Rhino House. To remedy this, we show above a photograph of our male Black Rhino—Roger, who with his mate Susan, completes Chester Zoo's Rhinoceros group. The photograph shows very clearly the prehensile "finger" on the upper lip of the Black Rhino, which is of course absent on the mouth of the Square-lipped Rhino.

Susan arrived at Chester Zoo in November 1959 when she was estimated to be one year old. Roger was purchased from Bristol Zoo in March 1960 and has the distinction of being the first Black Rhino ever to be bred in captivity in this country. He was born on 17th August, 1958.

### THE BIRD SECTION

As most people know, the families of birds which live longest, both in the wild and in captivity, are Birds of Prey, the Parrot family and the larger Waterfowl. It has been interesting, when checking records, to find that this is also the case in the Chester Zoo Bird Collection.

By far the oldest inhabitant is the Griffon Vulture— which was hatched in the Gardens in April, 1940 and has, therefore, been here for over twenty-two years. He is in splendid condition and claims the distinction of being the first Griffon Vulture ever to be bred and reared in captivity.

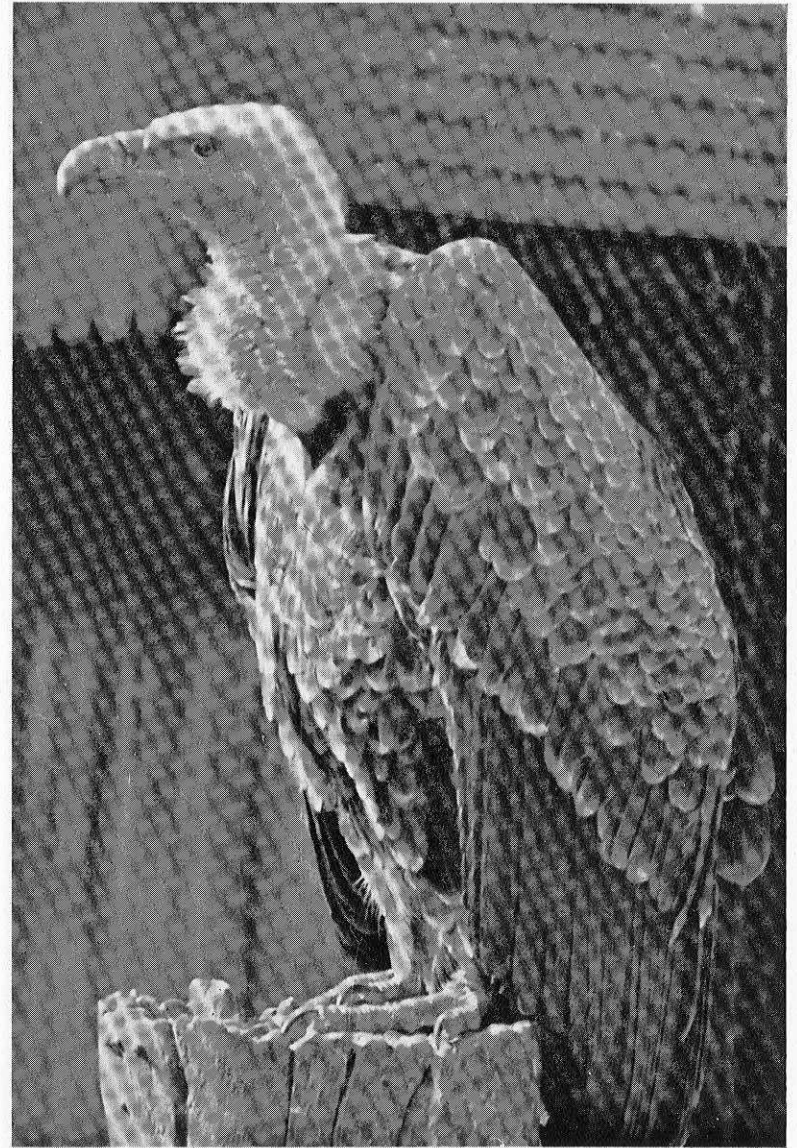
In December 1957 he had the mis-fortune to break a leg and although the break healed perfectly, he still has something of a "Charlie Chaplin" gait when walking on the ground. He lives in our large Bird of Prey flight, together with Ravens, Bateleur Eagles, a Secretary Bird, Black Vultures and a White-backed Vulture—with which he is on very friendly terms.

A number of Parrot-like birds have been in the Zoo since 1949 and they include a Leadbeatter's Cockatoo, two Princess of Wales Parrakeets and a Pennant Parrakeet.

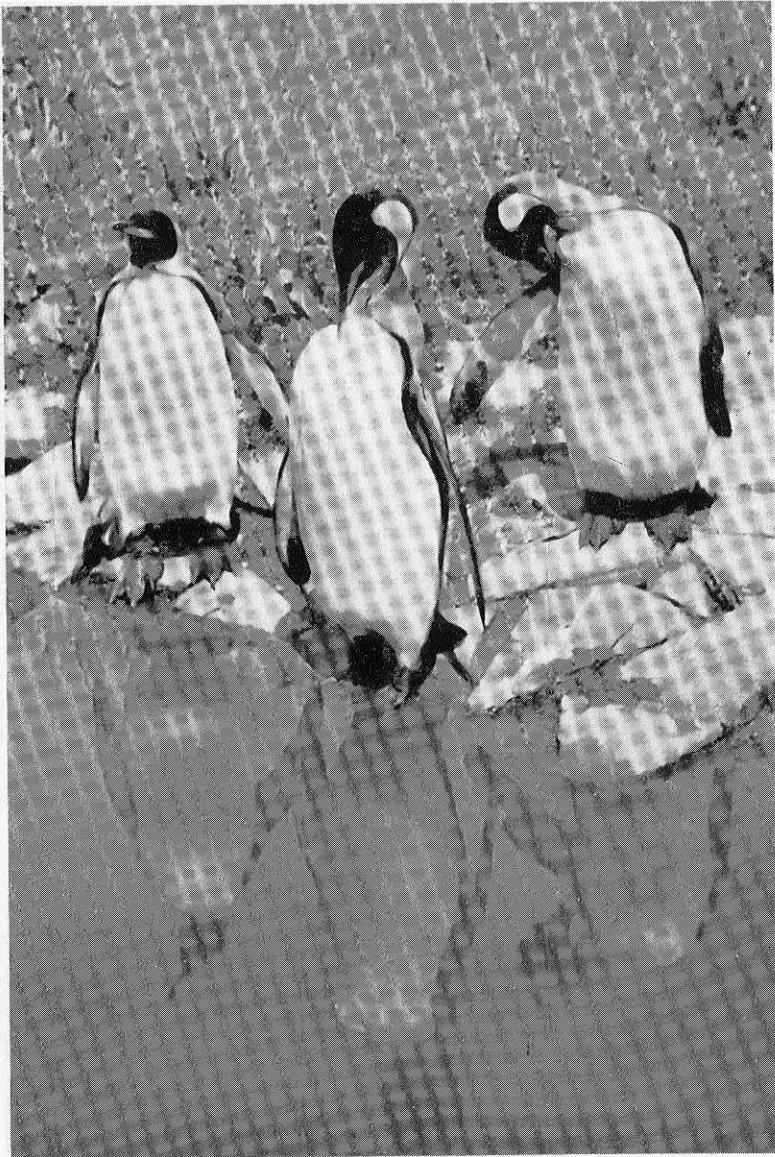
1950 saw the arrival of a pair of Blue-Yellow Macaws, a Black-headed Caique and a Brown-throated Conure (all members of the Parrot family). A Tawny Owl and our Cock Blackshouldered Peacock also arrived in the same year.

The ever popular Roseate Cockatoo—"Gorgeous" joined the Collection in 1952 and many other birds have been at Chester Zoo between five and ten years.

To turn from the long-lived to the very new—a number of new enclosures and aviaries are under constuction or are being planned. Those which will be occupied first are three large enclosures opposite the Eland and American Bison paddocks. The largest of



GRIFFON VULTURE



Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby

KING PENGUINS

these is approximately one and a half acres in extent and contains a magnificent reed-fringed pond. The other two enclosures are approximately three quarters of an acre and one and a quarter acres respectively. Each enclosure will have a shelter for winter protection and it is hoped to house and breed a number of Cranes and Water-fowl in them. It is probable that some of the smaller species of Deer will share the enclosures with the birds.

In addition to these three enclosures, the framework is erected for a large aviary alongside the Bird of Prey flight. This aviary will be approximately one hundred and twenty feet by fifteen feet overall and twenty feet high.

We are also extending the Penguin beach on the side of their enclosure facing the Flamingos. This will give our visitors a better view of the Penguins than at present.

### THE KING OF THE BIRDS

Our specimen of the Golden Eagle is housed in a large aviary, next to the Birds of Prey flight. Such is the size of the Bird, that some of our visitors may think it cruel to keep so large and noble a bird in such a comparatively small space.

Two facts must be borne in mind, however. The first is that the Bird has an injured wing and, at liberty, would be quite unable to capture prey. It would slowly but surely starve to death.

The second fact is, that like all its tribe, it is, except when hungry, incurably lazy! Even in the wild these birds spend the hours between hunting sessions perched on a crag happily doing nothing. Since our Golden Eagle does not need to worry about capturing the Hens and Rabbits on which we feed him, he can spend even more time doing what he likes best—nothing!

### IN THE AQUARIUM

Every month we hope to present readers with a brief account of some of the fascinating fish to be seen in the Aquarium. We hope that you will find the articles interesting and this month our subject is the family Cichlidae.

The Cichlids are classed as one of the most highly developed families in the great group of bony fish, or Teleostei. They are highly developed structurally and show a remarkable intelligence, particularly in the art of parenthood. This is made obvious when the breeding habits of the mouthbreeders (*Pelmatochromis*, *Tilapia*, *Haplochromis*) are observed.

All members of the Cichlid family tend the eggs and fry until they are large enough to fend for themselves. The mouthbreeders take this devotion a stage further. They not only perform all the usual Cichlid duties, such as fanning and cleaning the eggs whenever necessary, but actually carry the eggs in their mouths until they hatch—after which the fry are allowed to go out, only when it is safe for them to do so. At the slightest hint of danger, the fry swim into the safety of their parent's open mouth—stragglers being sucked in forcibly!

This behaviour proves very amusing, especially when the fry grow larger. When danger threatens there is the usual mad rush for safety. Unfortunately, as there is not sufficient room for all the youngsters inside their parent's mouth, the slowcoaches are left to swim around the bulging mouth, frantically looking for some nook or cranny in which to hide. In the Aquarium the youngsters can be saved, but in their natural element they would be eaten by other fish in a very short time.

At the time of writing we have fourteen different species of Cichlid, two of these being mouthbreeders. All the Cichlids show great activity and excitement, particularly during warm weather—when the observer may even be lucky enough to see them spawning.

### WHAT'S GOING ON IN THE GARDENING SECTION

At the time of writing we are almost at the end of the summer. It has not been a good one for flower gardens—everything has been later than usual and our best show of colour was in the latter part of August and September. However, the roses seem to have enjoyed the conditions and have been good all through.

We shall soon be preparing for Spring—clearing the beds and borders of summer plants and planting with a variety of spring flowering subjects. Eleven thousand Tulip Bulbs will be used, in addition to the usual Polyanthus, Pansies, Wallflowers, Forget-me-nots, etc.

We intend planting the Fountain Restaurant area with Polyanthus as last year and can only hope that they will be as successful as they were last spring.

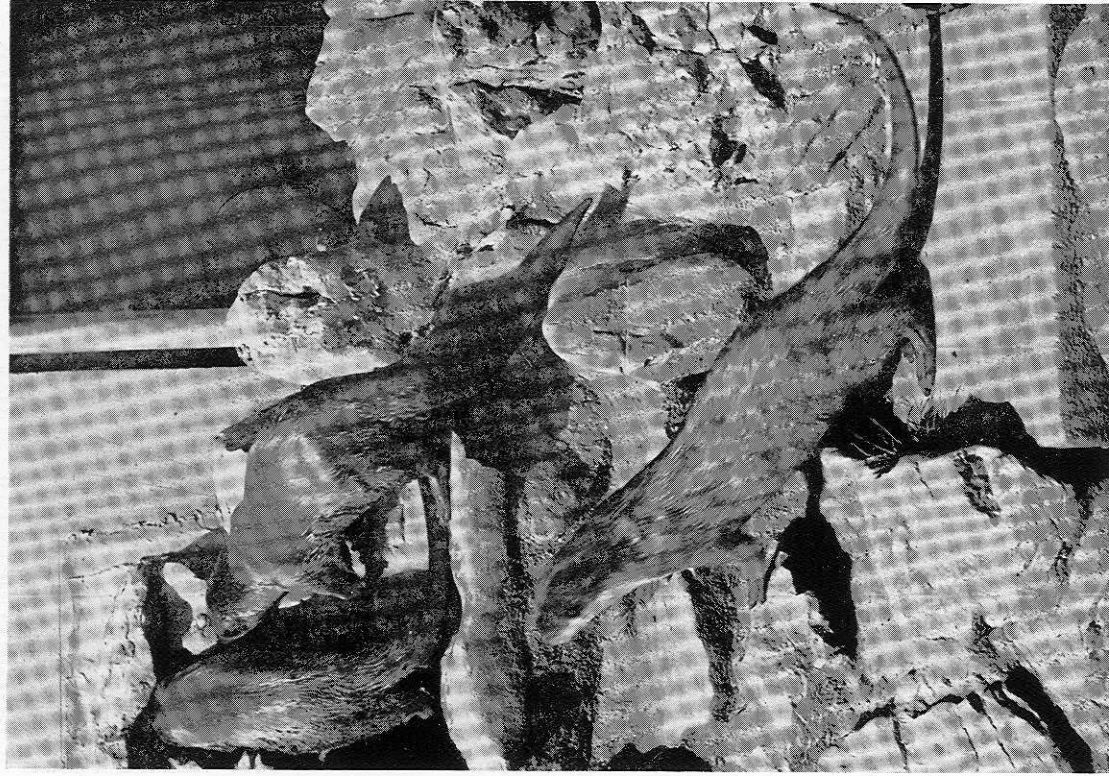
We have recently placed an order for a further five hundred Floribunda Roses. These will be planted on the left hand side when proceeding from the top of the Lion enclosure and will link up with the new rose garden—making a total of two thousand, seven hundred and fifty bushes, made up of thirty-nine varieties in this Rose Garden.

One of the beds in the H. T. Rose Garden has worn itself out. This will be cleared, the old soil removed and replaced with new, and the bed will be planted with Super Star, the new variety of H.T. Rose which has caused such a sensation in recent years.

It has been a busy time in the glasshouses, propagating such subjects as Heliotrope, Fuschias, Geraniums, all the grey foliage plants, etc.,—looking ahead, as a Gardener must, to next summer's beds.

The building of the new Tropical House is now going ahead and, with the completion of this in mind, we have for some time been propagating and growing on, plants suitable for planting in this House. We are always on the look-out for new plants to add to our tropical collection.

With all the further extensions planned for the Zoo, we can see a busy time ahead for the Gardening Department.



*Mr. & Mrs. E. Sorby*

TAILPIECE