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Chester Zoo News

AND GUIDE

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ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON - BY - CHESTER

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The North of England Zoological Society
ZOOLOGICAL GARDENS, UPTON-BY-CHESTER

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*COVER: Male Black Rhinoceros calf 'Jaspa' with its mother; see
page two.*

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BIRTHS

The second Black Rhinoceros (*Diceros bicornis*) born at Chester Zoo arrived at 9 a.m. on Monday, 22nd February. It is a male calf which at birth was estimated to weigh about 100lbs. and measure 20 inches high and 3 feet long. The Rhino House was closed to visitors for the first two days in order that the baby could settle down and accustom itself to feeding. Before the house was opened the press were invited to photograph him and pictures appeared in several national and local newspapers.

Soon after Radio Merseyside announced the birth over the local radio network they were flooded with telephone calls from listeners, mainly children, with suggestions for his name. A naming competition was organised very quickly and from the many entries received we decided 'Jaspa' would be the most suitable. The winner was given complimentary tickets to the Zoo.

Jaspa's parents are Roger and Susie, the same pair of Rhinoceroses which in September 1967 gave the Zoo its first breeding success with this species. Roger arrived in March 1960. He was bred at Bristol Zoo and has the distinction of being the first Rhinoceros born in this country. In the natural state the female Rhinoceros associates with the male only during the mating period and rears her calf entirely alone. For this reason Roger has to be kept in a separate enclosure throughout Jaspa's upbringing as otherwise he would probably kill the calf. Susie was brought from Africa in 1959. Her first calf, Reginald, was a very popular attraction and eventually was sent to Moscow Zoo in June last year.

Jaspa appears slightly smaller than the previous calf but has been far more lively, running about the enclosure and charging his mother from only a few days old. The gestation period of the Black Rhinoceros lasts from 16 to 18 months and the calf grows comparatively slowly. It suckles for up to 2 years and does not become fully grown until 5 or 6 years old.



BLACK RHINOCEROS CALF "JASPA" (*Diceros bicornis*)

A. W. Green, A.R.P.S.

With Easter and the beginning of the season only a few weeks away, Jaspa has been born at an ideal time of year and we have no doubt he will enrapture the public, just as his brother Reginald did before him!

On exhibition with its mother in the Monkey House is a baby Mona Monkey (*Cercopithecus mona*) which also was born recently.

BIRD NOTES

Presentations to the Bird Section include a Quaker Parrakeet (*Myiopsitta monacha*) and a Hume's Bar-tailed Pheasant (*Syrnaticus humiae humiae*).

The latter species is found in the mountains of Manipur, in the Lushai, Naga and Patkai Hills and in northern Burma west of the Irrawaddy River as far south as Mount Victoria, where it lives at altitudes between 4,000 and 10,000 feet. At one time this brightly coloured Pheasant was a rare exhibit in the western world but in recent years has become far more common. It may be seen in enclosure No. 17a.

RARE BIRDS STOLEN

Sometime between Monday evening and Tuesday morning, 15th-16th February, a number of very valuable birds were stolen from the collection. When keepers reported for work at the Bird House they discovered that wire netting had been prised away from a door giving access to the breeding aviaries and a pair each of Sickie-billed Birds of Paradise, Magnificent Birds of Paradise, Barraband Parrakeets and Crimson-Winged Parrakeets, and also one of the Queen of Bavaria Conures were missing.

Through concerted efforts by the Police the birds were traced but it is with great regret we have to report that all the Birds of Paradise and one of the Crimson-winged Parrakeets were already dead.

A man has been charged in connection with the theft and we will publish further details when these are available.

NEW SEA LION POOL

The original Sea Lion Pool was completed in 1946. A large pit covering an area of 8,000 square feet was excavated to a depth of 12 feet and into this fresh water was pumped continuously from the Zoo's artesian well. As far as the health of the Sea Lions was concerned, the pool was very successful but unfortunately the constant movement of water against the clay sides and bottom caused it to become discoloured with sediment and prevented the public from observing the Sea Lions swimming underwater. Nevertheless, the animals thrived for many years and even reproduced.

During the heatwave in June of last year it was found necessary to divert some of the water from the artesian well to supplement the town supply to the public toilets, etc., in the Zoo grounds. The result was that less water was available for the Sea Lion enclosure and in the exceptionally hot weather bacteria in the pool multiplied to such an extent that it turned foul rapidly. The Sea Lions were immediately affected and died quite suddenly.

To prevent any recurrence the pool has been completely redesigned. The new enclosure covers approximately the same area as the original while the pool itself is constructed of concrete and divided into two sections, one being larger and deeper than the other, so that they can be drained, cleaned and refilled with fresh water very easily. The larger section is 7 feet deep on average while the smaller is 5 feet and they hold 150,000 and 100,000 gallons respectively. Each section takes about 4 hours to drain and both can be refilled in a total of 2½ days. The shape of the pool has been changed somewhat, the sides being more irregular; a rocky eminence containing caves has been built to provide the Sea Lions with extra shelter and also to enable us to separate them should this become necessary. The original rock ledge on which many Sea Lions have liked to sunbathe in the past has been retained in the new design. As before, the pool will be supplied with continuous running water from the artesian well, but of course now visitors will be able to watch the animals when they are submerged.

The top photograph on the right shows an earlier stage of the reconstruction work. The main pool is in the foreground and has already been concreted but the earth bed of the shallower section is still visible beyond the dividing wall. As a matter of interest, the large concrete bollards being used in the construction of this wall were employed as anti-tank traps during the last war. At the end of the war, when regular building materials were in short supply, the Director-Secretary, Mr. Mottershead, obtained permission to collect all the bollards in the neighbourhood and used these instead. They can still be seen in many of the enclosures in the older part of the Zoo.

The lower photograph was taken recently. Both sections of the pool are almost completed and on the far right of the site the rock caves are under construction.

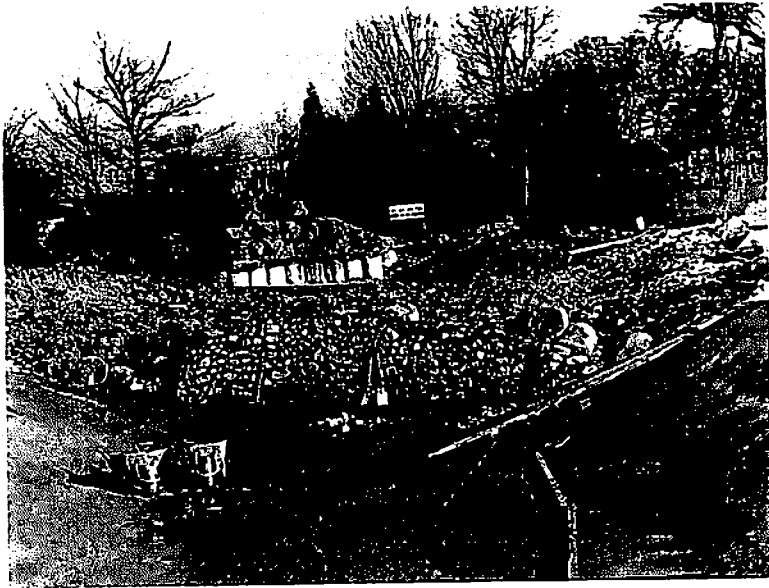
At the present time two Sea Lions are being held for us at another Zoo and will be introduced to the new enclosure as soon as it is ready. We feel sure that this large and attractive pool will prove an even more popular exhibit than the original, which was a firm favourite with visitors for many years.

NEW BREEDING AVIARIES

Plans to convert the site of the old Parrot House into a Tortoise enclosure have been shelved and instead we are erecting a number of new breeding aviaries, as these are required more urgently. Details of the design will be published when the construction work is nearer completion.

LEOPARD CUBS

Two of the young Leopards born last year have been sent to a new home at Edinburgh Zoo. They are a female from the litter of three cubs born in May and a male from the July litter of two.



K. W. Gurn, A.R.P.S.

NEW SEA LION POOL UNDER CONSTRUCTION



AQUARIUM NEWS

This spring when the Aquarium was being repainted, polystyrene tiles were put on the ceiling to help reduce the noise. They have certainly deadened the echo but the test will come when large parties of school children start racing around the passages.

At this time of the year thinning and transplanting of the plants in the aquaria takes place. From November to March the electric lights are left on over the tanks until 10 p.m. to help the growth during the short winter days, thus providing plenty of healthy plants to start the season.

Also at this time fish are restocked. These include:

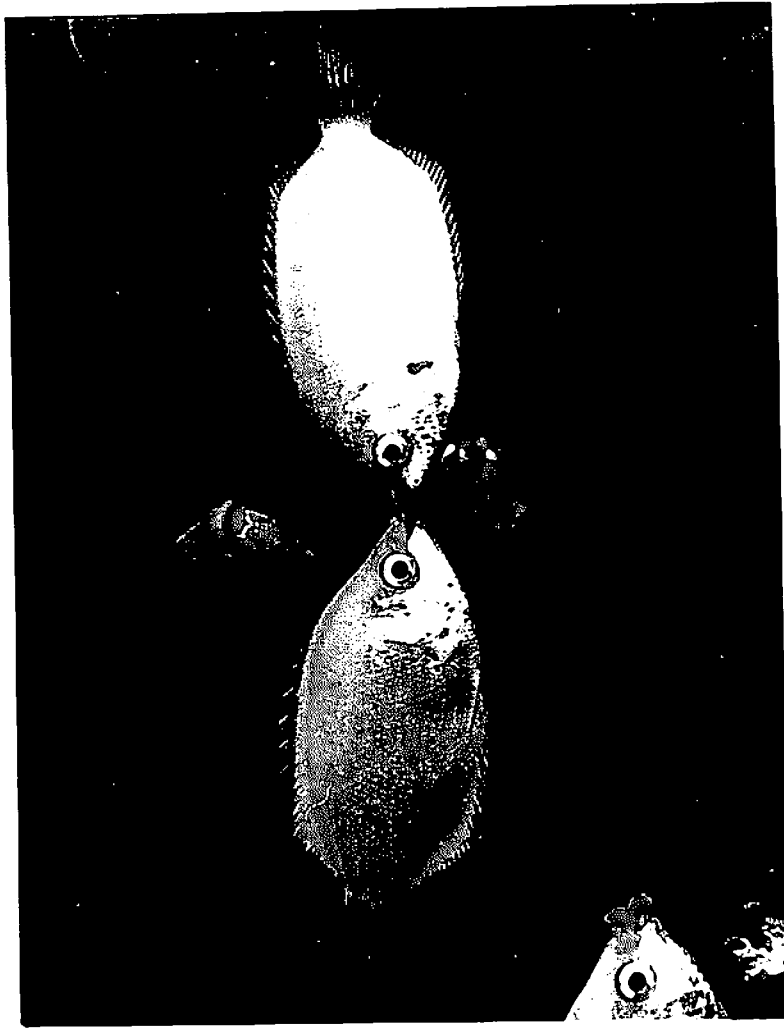
- Male Fighters
- Reed Fish
- Birchir
- Monodactylus sebae
- Black and White Damsels
- Scorpion Fish
- Tomato Clowns

Presentations include four young Jewelled Cichlid, 25 Red Devil Cichlid and a Tyretrack Eel. The Eel is a species we have not exhibited in the Aquarium before. It will grow to a length of 18 inches but being a young specimen, measures only 6 inches at present.

With regard to breeding we have young Madagascan Rainbows and Nigger Barbs and the Axolotls have spawned once more.

KISSING GOURAMIES

The Kissing Gouramies (*Helostoma temminckii*) shown in the photograph belong to just one species of hundreds on exhibition in our Aquarium. These freshwater fishes are members of the family Anabantidae. They originate from Java, Borneo and surrounding



Brian Pengelly

KISSING GOURAMIES (*Helostoma temminckii*)

islands and may grow to a length of 12 inches. The purpose of the kissing action is not altogether known but some experts believe it is used for picking algae off plants, etc.

Unlike most Anabantids, the Kissing Gouramies do not build nests. After a colourful courtship which involves the display of fins, the male fish encircles the female with his body. She releases her eggs and these are fertilised immediately by the male. The mass of from 400 to 2,000 eggs float on the surface for about a day when the fry are hatched.

The Anabantids are also referred to as Labyrinth Fishes, of which there are several species in the Aquarium, *i.e.* Fighting Fish and many varieties of Gourami. In addition to its normal gills each fish possesses a breathing organ known as a labyrinth. Through a network of fine capillaries in the wall of the labyrinth, oxygen is absorbed from the air and passed into the bloodstream. The fish swims periodically to the surface and takes in a bubble of air which passes into this extra breathing organ. At the same time the air already in the labyrinth is excreted through the edge of the gill covers. In addition the gills are used to obtain oxygen from the water in the normal way, so Labyrinth Fishes are therefore extremely adaptable and able to survive in water lacking in oxygen.

In several other members of the Anabantidae the male fish constructs a nest of saliva bubbles which floats often under a leaf or similar vegetation. When his nest is ready the male seeks a mate and drives her towards it. At frequent intervals during the mating he swims away from the female and quickly catches up the fertilised eggs in his mouth, surrounding them with a bubble and depositing them in the nest. When mating is completed the male chases the female fish away and begins the job of protecting the eggs. Until the fry are hatched two days later he is making new bubbles continuously to replace those which have burst. His paternal responsibilities last for several days after the hatching until the young Gouramies have grown sufficiently to enable them to fend for themselves.

EXCHANGES

In an exchange with Bristol Zoo we have received a Snowy Owl



MOUSTACHED MONKEYS (*Cercopithecus cephus*)

E. Kirkland, F.R.P.S.

(*Nyctea scandiaca*) and a Moustached Monkey (*Cercopithecus cephus*). Two Great Eagle Owls (*Bubo bubo*) which were hatched in 1970 and a number of the recent litter of Rainbow Boas (*Epicrates cenchris*) were part of the consignment sent from Chester.

The new Snowy Owl is a cock and has been obtained as a mate for the sole hen already in the collection. He can be recognised very easily as his plumage is almost entirely white in comparison with that of the female, which is barred with black. The hen is a magnificent bird and was the subject on the cover of the December 'Zoo News'. She and the original male were acquired in 1960 and in 1965 hatched two chicks which were the first Snowy Owls bred here.

The Moustached Monkey is a female and is on exhibition in the Monkey House where there is also a pair of this species.

Two female Drills (*Mandrillus leucophaeus*), two Tree Shrews (*Tupaia glis*) and a female Senegal Bushbaby (*Galago senegalensis*) were received in another exchange, this time with London Zoo. Among the various Monkeys sent in return was the male Sooty Mangabey (*Cercocebus torquatus*) bred in May last year.

The Tree Shrews, now on show in a spacious enclosure in the Nocturnal House, are very interesting animals. They are classed as primates by most authorities and are distributed in mainland Southern Asia, Java, Borneo, Sumatra, and several islands in the Philippines. The total length of the species, including a long bushy tail, is between 6 and 9 inches. Apart from their longish snouts, Tree Shrews are best described as squirrel-like in appearance. They are found in forests but, despite their popular name, live mainly at ground level. Diet consists of insects, fruit, seeds and leaves.

The gestation period is about 7 weeks with an average of two young in a litter. These are born blind and naked in a nest constructed among tree roots or in a similar place on the forest floor. The young open their eyes at 2 weeks old and are weaned between 5 and 6 weeks. A Tree Shrew has been recorded as living for 5½ years in captivity.



SENEGAL BUSHBABY (*Galago senegalensis*)

E. Kirkland, F.R.P.S.

REPTILE SECTION

New arrivals are a Common Agama (*Agama agama*) which has been presented and a Matamata Turtle (*Chelus fimbriatus*).

The Turtle is an intriguing reptile which has never been exhibited here before. It is found in Venezuela, Brazil and the Guianas and has a most unusual appearance. The head is flat and triangular and looks remarkably like a dead leaf floating in the water. The eyes are small and situated well forward on the sides of the head. This terminates in a thin extended snout which usually projects above the surface. On the underside of the head and long neck are thin fibres of skin which may attract fish and other animals on which the Matamata Turtle feeds. The carapace is fairly flat with a horny surface. The total body length of this species varies from 11 to 15 inches.

MEMBERS' TICKETS

On Decimalisation Day, 15th February, the admission charges to the Zoo were increased to 30p for adults with the appropriate reductions for children under 14 years and parties. At half price, Members' Tickets now cost 15p (3s.) each.

