



INDEPENDENT **ZOO!** ENTHUSIASTS SOCIETY

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Contents

EDITORIAL by Tim Brown	- 1
Rome Zoo by Sam Whitbread	- 2
How Many <i>Ateles</i> ? by Mike Grayson	- 5
Two Notable Bird Gardens by Rosemary Low	- 8
Gleanings From The Internet by Sam Whitbread	- 12
Heidelberg Zoo by Mike Grayson	- 14
Dartmoor Wildlife Park by Matthew Peace	- 17
Tales From The Taxonomic Treasure Trove II by Mike Grayson	- 19
Three Forgotten Collections:	
- Thorney Wildlife Park by Bernard Sayers	- 23
- Kelling Park Aviaries by Bernard Sayers	- 25
- Brentwood Zoo by Bernard Sayers	- 27
Editor's Query	- 29
Emmen Zoo by Tim Brown	- 30
Cursed Are The Meek by Mike Grayson	- 34
African Ungulates In The Czech Republic by Sam Whitbread	- 36
Keeling's Cogitations by Clinton Keeling	- 38
Note to Contributors	- 42
The Amazon River Dolphin by Sam Whitbread	- 43
Enthusiast's Choice by Sam Whitbread	- 47
Parting Shot	- 52
Quick Quiz	- 53

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EDITORIAL

Less of an editorial and more of a 'state of the nation' address I would say. You will obviously have noticed the new look of our magazine and this represents something of a relaunch of the society after some two years of regrouping. Two aspects are particularly important. Firstly it quickly became apparent that I needed assistance even under the old protocol. The cavalry finally arrived in the shape of Sam Whitbread, fresh from obtaining his zoology degree, to pull us shouting and screaming into the computer age. This added dimension is critical. Secondly, I have always been a little concerned that the message we spread and the information we disseminate is limited to a comparatively small audience. Whilst I do not want to lose the specialist nature of our publication I have decided to 'spread our wings' a little and try to move on to another level. The vehicle for doing this will be an A4, part-colour, glossy magazine which I am hoping will be sold in zoo shops. This publication will become part of your subscription and will have two issues per year. ZOO! will also become a bi-annual publication and there may also be occasional newsletters. Subscribers to the new magazine (as yet untitled) will become members of the IZES and receive ZOO! as well. We will instigate a new bout of promotion and hopefully also launch a web-site. As a business man I enter into all this with my eyes open and I feel it is something we have to do in order to make a difference.

Even this issue of ZOO! represents something of a departure from the norm in that it is largely written by contributors other than myself. This has helped enormously and I hope that this can continue. My thanks go to everyone who sent me a contribution and therefore enabled this issue to emerge before Christmas.

Next year should see us revive the IZES outing once more and the proposed venue is the world-famous Jersey Zoo. It is hoped that we will be allowed behind-the-scenes particularly to see the reptile collection. No date has yet been allocated but it seems likely to be April. If you are interested please write to me as soon as possible.

Towards the end of every year I attend a specialist music festival in Holland and always use the opportunity to visit a zoo or two (this year Artis and Rhenen). Zoo attendances have been very large in the Netherlands this year with over two million souls at Arnhem and 1.5 million at Rotterdam. Doubtless other places did very well also. Britain has had a fair year overall but as ever this can vary enormously from zoo to zoo. At the end of the season there are two closures to report - both establishments that have been around for quite a while. Over in Derbyshire Riber Castle has closed and news of this imminent event prompted me to make my first visit. Maybe it isn't fair to judge a place when in its death throes but I must admit that it is the kind of 'larch-pole and chicken-wire' zoo that I can't get excited over. Poor labelling, fibre-glass dinosaurs, lots of mud - I'm sorry if I offend someone but it doesn't seem like much of a loss to me. The best thing about it is the view (which will still be there of course) and, coincidentally, Todmorden has an almost identical Victorian castellated house over-looking it. More important was the closure of Rode Tropical Bird Gardens, possibly the largest avian collection in the UK. Those collections which are privately operated have particular problems with regards to their long-term future and it is sad to see a life's work fall apart when the owners are not around. Donald Risdon contributed much and I am sure he would not have wished it all consigned to history quite so

markets, where they can fetch prices of US\$ 1,000 each! Nothing is known of the habits of McCord's Box Turtle in the wild, though a few specimens have found their way into USA zoos.

The case of the Asian box turtles is a good note to end on. Their recent sudden crash in numbers caught the zoo/conservation movements on the hop. There is still (just) time to save some of these chelonians. Captive breeding is the way it will be done, since it seems that strict protection in their native habitats is impossible to enforce. Will modern zoos meet this challenge? Or, if an article similar to the above is written ten years from now, will it simply have a few more sad stories to tell?

African Ungulates in the Czech Republic

By Sam Whitbread

The East Bohemian Zoo is situated in a partially forested valley just outside the small town of Dvur Kralove Nad Lebem (pop. 16,000). It is perhaps the most modern and advanced zoo in the Czech Republic.

The collection was founded in 1946 but it wasn't until Ing. Josef Vagner CSc was appointed as manager in 1965 that the zoo began to make a name for itself. He led a series of expeditions to Africa, collecting specimens to expand the nucleus zoo. The first of these trips was in 1969 and by the end of the seventh one, 847 individual mammals, 617 birds and 429 reptiles had been brought back alive. Many of these animals were the founders of the present breeding groups.

Today, the zoo occupies 78 hectares and contains nearly 1,500 animals of over 200 species. Mammals dominate the collection and up to 150 individuals are born each year.

The zoo is heavily involved in scientific work. Research takes place in modern labs into parasitology, microbiology, virology, haematology, biochemistry and nutrition. There are separate labs for veterinary science and a further two operating theatres.

The zoo relies on preventative measures to maintain the animal's health. The animal houses are all heated by two methods to ensure against the failure of one. This is an important measure as the outside temperatures can drop to -20 degrees celsius in winter. The quarters of the zoos most valuable animals are fitted with closed circuit television so as to closely monitor their health and safety.

This zoo is a large general collection, which specialises in African fauna, particularly ungulates. It is most famous for its assemblage of rhinoceroses.

Although the number of species in the inventory is slightly decreased from a few decades ago, it is still almost unrivalled and justly deserved of its world fame. Alongside the ubiquitous zoo species are many which, although in some cases common in the wild, are almost unknown in captive conditions. In many zoos it is not unusual to find a single or a couple of subspecies of a particular animal, but at Dvur Kralove there are many or all of the subspecies of a large proportion of the species held.

As mentioned, there is a general collection of animals including many birds and a handful of reptiles and fish, but the zoo is primarily concerned with mammals and excels in its hoof-stock section. There are good numbers of carnivore and primate species. Amongst others, Jackal, Palm Civet, Bat-eared Fox, Spotted and Brown Hyaenas, Siberian Weasel, Fossa (which breed and an individual of which has recently been exported to Marwell Zoo) and African Leopard are kept in spacious, glass-fronted exhibits with an artificial rock backdrop. Anthropoids

include Orang-utan, Chimpanzee, Gorilla and Colobus and are, in the main, kept in half-moated, half-walled enclosures.

The list of ungulates makes for very impressive reading. There are Impala, Springbok, Slender-horned Gazelle, Dama Gazelle, Mountain Reedbuck, Bongo, Blesbok, Rothschild's and Reticulated Giraffes and both Greater and Lesser Kudu, Pygmy and Common Hippos, Cape and Congo subspecies of African Buffalo and African Elephants (yes, I know they are not officially ungulates, but they do stem from the same ancestors).

The accommodation for the hoof-stock consists of either small dry-moated hard-standings or large, grassy, dry-moated paddocks. Of most species, there are two breeding groups. This ensures the survival of some individuals in the event of an epidemic breaking out in one.

There are all three species of zebra with four subspecies of Common Zebra. As well as Chapman's, Damara and Grant's, there is the unusual Maneless Zebra, not widely accepted as a true subspecies. Since 1969, there have been over 160 zebra births with the Maneless and *E. grevyi* being, by far, the most prolific.

There are impressive numbers of the *Tragelaphus* genus with Bongo, Nyala, Sitatunga and both Greater and Lesser Kudu. The Bongo first bred here in 1974 and has bred regularly ever since.

At one time, both Blesbok and Bontebok, Topi and Hunter's, Cape and Jackson's Hartebeests were all to be seen and all in large breeding groups. The only one of this group of antelopes still to be seen is the Blesbok (*Damaliscus dorcas philipsi*) although the guide-book also lists Caama Hartebeests.

The wildebeests are well represented with both species and at least two subspecies of Brindled Gnu. The White-tailed Gnu have an impressive history here: the founders of the current breeding group were imported in 1972 with 3.7 animals from South Africa. A further 2.11 arrived in 1974 and individual males from Hannover Zoo in 1980 and a dealer in 1987. By 1988, at least 53 individuals had been born.

Perhaps the animals most closely associated with this collection are rhinoceroses. Three species are held: Black, White and Indian, all of which breed. There are groups of each species with *D. bicornis* being the most numerous here. At the time of writing, this is the second largest group of captive black rhinos in the world after Port Lympne's 11 or so individuals.

There are both subspecies of White Rhinoceros: Southern and Northern (also known as the Central or Cotton's White Rhino), *Ceratotherium simum cottoni*. Along with San Diego Wild Animal Park, this is the only institution in the world to hold this taxon. The entire world population of this subspecies is significantly less than 100, six of which are kept here. Their story started in 1975 when 2.4 wild caught animals were imported from the Shambe region of Southern Sudan. These animals were around three years old with one of the females around 18 months. Two more wild caught individuals arrived in 1977 and 1986. The former animal, a female, came from Knowsley Safari Park whilst the latter, a male, from London. By 1993, three of the group had died (one of trauma, one was euthanased after falling in the dry moat and the third was put to sleep due to old age at 39 years). 1.2 animals were sent to San Diego Wild Animal Park in 1989 whilst the Knowsley animal remained and sired a total of 1.2 calves, one, a hybrid, sired by a Southern male whilst still in England. Currently there are 6 specimens (3.3) with one subspecific hybrid here and 1.2 animals at San Diego.

On top of all the exhibits so far mentioned were many species I have left out such as three species of Lechwe, Roan and Sable Antelopes, Three species of Oryx, Addax and several more notables.

The zoo is rather difficult to get to but is one that is well worth the effort to do so. It's nearest largish town is Hradec Kralove from which there is a regular train service involving a change at Jeromer. From the station, the zoo is 1.5 - 2 miles distant on the far side of the town. Located in a rather uninspiring (zoological garden-wise) country, this should not put off any serious zoo buffs from visiting. The zoo is well deserved of its reputation as a centre for breeding rare and endangered African ungulates.

Addendum: the recent edition of EAZA News carries an article on the birth of a female Northern White Rhinoceros here. The calf was born on 29th June at 2.30am. The mother, Najin, was herself born here in 1989 making the latest birth the first F2 White Rhino of this subspecies to be born in captivity. The father, Saut, was wild born in 172 and arrived in Dvur Kralove in 1975. This collection has become the only zoo in the world to have bred four rhinoceros taxa.

Keeling's Cogitations

By Clinton Keeling

The last issue was certainly worth waiting for, packed as it was with interesting material, although speaking for myself I'd like to see more - a lot more in fact - of the sort of article we read a couple years back on the Barbary Sheep, by Richard O'Grady: I thought it excellent - and from me that's ecstatic praise. I must confess I'm not too keen on what I call the "What-I-Spied-With-My-Little-Eye-When-I-Visited-The-Bloktown-Zoological-Garden" sort of feature, which as often as not turns out to be a glorified list of species names, but I fully appreciate I may well be in a very small minority here. It would be interesting to discover what other members particularly like or dislike - so here's your chance to ask "Do we really have to put up with 'Keeling's Cogitations' being inflicted upon us?"!

Well, I did as our noble Editor suggested, and read and re-read - several times in fact - William Conway's article (pp.4-10), and I can only assume I'm becoming somewhat dim in my old age, as I still don't quite know what he's getting at - or, to be frank, is there an element of "the King's new clothes" here? Speaking as an experienced writer and communicator I'd suggest, in all seriousness, he rambled on for a bit -, far-too long, in fact if he'd condensed what he had to say into, what, three pages he'd have made a far more concise and understandable job of it. If I read his message correctly though (and to be fair to him I might not have done), what he is proposing is simply not the work of a zoological garden per se, or at least not as any of them are at the present time. In a way his article amplifies a fear I've nurtured for some years now - i.e. will the z.g. of the future be less concerned with animals than an abstruse concept of them? On two points I'm going to disagree, strenuously, with Mr. Conway: on p.4 he makes the astonishing assertion that 25% of all birds (presumably species) have been exterminated in the last 200 years - which I'm afraid I just do not believe, while as for the implication there'll be no tropical forests in 45 years time, here I'm strongly reminded of something the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds assured us back in the early 1980s - that within five years the Robin would be extinct as a British bird...

Good, now for some sense - in Sean Rovai's "Enthusiasts Choice". I entirely agree with his enthusing about Antwerp's Egyptian Temple, which is the most wonderful animal house I know, but when, on p.13, he mentioned that place's Nocturnal House I recalled visiting it in the early 1970s and being somewhat surprised to see some unlikely subjects in it - Tawny and Little Owls, Common Rabbit, Musk Rat... But why should I have been surprised, as these are all nocturnal - it's just that I wasn't accustomed to seeing such species in similar houses in British collections.

Interesting point brought up by Mike Grayson on p.22 when he remarks that only the immature Zebra Shark bears the well-defined zebra-like markings, as this is a common situation amongst many species - look how beautifully marked the young Marbled Cichlid is when compared with the adult, while there's just no comparison when it comes to beauty between the young and the adult Red-eared Terrapin.

Mention on the following page of the Gang-gang Cockatoo reminds me of an advertisement in "Cage Birds" (now "Cage and Aviary Birds") back in the early 1950s, in which the then Duke of Bedford (who was destined to die tragically a year or so later on his Devon estate) offered a surplus male to the first reader to contact him offering it the proverbial "good home". This is a gorgeous species, and I've often wondered who the lucky recipient was. Incidentally, it's a little-known fact that until as recently as the mid-80s a nice male Gang-gang was kept behind the scenes, in an ordinary Parrot cage, at Regent's Park's old Parrot House.

Crimson Shining Parrot (same page) - I've been fortunate enough to see just one living example of this species - under the most incredible circumstances. An elderly lady showed me her cherished pet of this species, in the lounge of her home in a Sussex village - much to my absolute astonishment. Fortunately she knew and cherished it for what it was, so I didn't begrudge her the possession of this treasure.

Very interesting point on p.25 re Toucans - "Hornbills seem to have replaced them in captivity"; yes, because as far as I can gather the former have mysteriously and suddenly become "difficult". According to some if you feed them on fruit you are condemning them to death due to accumulations of iron. As someone who has kept Toucans (and Aracaris) and Hornbills I've never experienced any difficulties in this direction and - far more important - neither did my birds!

"Raccoon Dogs (I don't think there are any in the UK at the present)..." (p.26). The Dog Warden based at Havant in Hampshire (who, believe it or not, realises there are animals other than domestic varieties in the world), has assured me that what appeared to be almost certainly an example of this singular-looking species has been seen on more than one occasion in the Horndean area. Horndean? Horndean... Yes, you are right, this is where the dead Jungle Cat was picked up a few years ago.

Right - Bernard Sayers and I really are going to disagree, although, as gentlemen, we shall do so in the most decorous manner... He describes himself as a dilettante -which, Bernard, you most assuredly are not. Look up the word in a dictionary and you will soon learn that it's "Someone who trifles in a subject in a superficial or casual way" - a strange way of describing one of the