

A BIRD EXTRAVAGANZA WITH A FRENCH ACCENT

by Pierre de Chabannes

Most French zoos and animal parks rarely have more than 50 species of birds and these consist mostly of common species such as ostriches, rheas, macaws, pheasants and ducks. Having a park devoted entirely to the wonderful world of birds seemed at first fairly unusual, but the Parc des Oiseaux de Villars les Dombes - Villar des Dombes birdpark - created in 1970 and located a few kilometres (miles) from Lyon (France's second largest city) was up to the challenge and within a few years became one of the most beautiful and interesting animal parks in France. Today, it houses more than 2,000 birds of 400 different species on a 35 hectares (approx. 86 acres) site located in the centre of a legally protected area of natural marshes and lakes known as Les Dombes.



Pierre de Chabannes

Australian Shoveller.

The tour of the park begins by a pond surrounded by aquatic vegetation, which is home to a large breeding group of Caribbean Flamingos *Phoenicopterus ruber*. The flamingos share this with a number of other species which occur in the Caribbean and South America, such as White-faced Whistling Ducks *Dendrocygna viduata*, Fulvous Whistling Ducks *D. bicolor*, Bahama Pintails *Anas bahamensis*, Chiloe Wigeon *A. sibilatrix*, Ruddy Ducks *Oxyura jamaicensis* and the most prolific breeding group of Argentine Ruddy Ducks or Lake Ducks *O. vittata* in any zoological collection in France.



Philippine Cockatoo.

Pierre de Chabannes



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Interior of tropical house.

A wooded walkway takes visitors past the pond to La Maison des Oiseaux - the House of Birds. This is a tropical house with a dozen (12) nicely landscaped aviaries housing various tropical birds, including some rarely seen species. The first of these aviaries houses a group of Blue-bellied Rollers *Coracias cyanogaster* and a pair of d'Arnaud's Barbets *Trachyphonus darnaudii*. A female Black-tailed Trogon *Trogon melanurus* - a species not kept anywhere else in Europe - a Blue-crowned Motmot *Momotus m. momota*, some Blacksmith Plovers *Vanellus armatus* and a pair of Red-flanked Lorikeets *Charmosyna placentis* occupy the second aviary. Living in the third aviary are Stella's Lorikeets *C. papou stellae*, some Pekin Robins or Red-billed Leiothrix *Leiothrix lutea*, Blue or Western Crowned Pigeons *Goura cristata*, some Orange-cheeked Waxbills *Estrilda melpoda* and a group of Timor Sparrows *Padda fuscata*, the last named a species kept in fewer than 10 zoos around the world. The fourth aviary houses a pair of Black-naped Fruit Doves *Ptilinopus melanospila*, some Crested Wood Partridges *Rollulus rouloul*, a group of Painted Quail *Coturnix chinensis*, Heck's Grassfinches *Poephila acuticauda hecki*, Gouldian Finches *Erythrura gouldiae*, a few Red-headed Parrotfinches *E. psittacea*, some Diamond Firetails *Stagonopleura guttata*, Diamond Doves *Geopelia cuneata* and Pacific Parrotlets *Forpus coelestis*. In the fifth aviary visitors can see Black-necked Stilts *Himantopus mexicanus*, African Montane or Broad-ringed White-eyes *Zosterops poliogastrus eurycricotus* (misidentified as



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Caribbean Flamingo enclosure.

Kikuyu White-eyes), a large breeding flock of Black-and-white Mannikins *Spermestes (Lonchura) bicolor*, Namaqua Doves *Oena capensis*, Speckled Mousebirds *Colius striatus* and the only Black Crakes *Amaurornis flavirostris* displayed in a French collection.

On the other side of the house there are three larger aviaries showcasing other tropical birds such as Collared Warbling Finches *Poospiza hispaniolensis*, Red Bishops *Euplectes orix*, Red-billed Queleas *Quelea quelea*, the Sahel Paradise Whydah *Vidua orientalis* - which in the wild parasitises the Green-winged Pytilia or Melba Finch *Pytilia melba*, Lilac-breasted Roller *C. c. caudata*, White-headed Buffalo Weaver *Dinemellia dinemelli*, Cut-throat Finch *Amadina fasciata*, Fischer's Turaco *Tauraco fischeri*, Cape Thick-knee *Burhinus capensis*, African Olive Pigeons *Columba aquatrix*, Pheasant Pigeons *Otidiphaps nobilis*, Blue-grey Tanagers *Thraupis episcopus*, Croaking Ground Doves *Columbina cruziana*, Red-cowled or Pope Cardinal *Paroaria dominicana*, Silver-beaked Tanager *Ramphocelus carbo*, Red-crested Turacos *T. erythrolophus*, Golden Tanager *Tangara arthus*, Pileated Finches *Coryphospingus pileatus*, Hoopoe *Upupa epops* and many more.

In 2009, a new building was opened housing the largest collection of toucans, toucanets and araçarís seen in France since the Jardin d'Oiseaux Tropicaux at La Londe Les Maures in southern France decided to no longer keep most of its toucans, toucanets and araçarís and instead began breeding



Australian Thick-knee.

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Dalmation Pelican.

hornbills in the late 1990s. Breeding pairs of several species are kept in nicely landscaped medium-sized indoor aviaries. These include the only pair of Guianan Toucanets *Selenidera culik* to be seen in a French collection, which shares the aviary with some Small-billed Tinamous *Crypturellus parvirostris*, another species which cannot be seen anywhere else in France. Non-breeding pairs of Channel-billed Toucans *Ramphastos v. vitellinus* and Toco Toucans *R. toco* are also displayed, living with Chaco Chachalacas *Ortalis canicollis*. There are a pair of Red-billed Toucans *R. tucanus*, a pair of Green Araçaris *Pteroglossus viridis* and a pair of Keel-billed Toucans *R. sulfuratus brevicarinatus*, the last two species of which are breeding. Living behind the scenes is the last known Crimson-rumped Toucanet *Aulacorhynchus haematopygus* in France and one of the last remaining representatives of this species in Europe. It is living in a large aviary and, the hope is, that a mate can be found for it. This species was bred repeatedly in the past in this collection.

After leaving the house, visitors arrive at one of the most impressive exhibits in the park - the gigantic Pantanal walk-through aviary - housing several South American species which move freely around the aviary and often come into direct contact with the public. The first species to be spotted is usually the Scarlet Ibis *Eudocimus ruber*, followed by the Puna Ibis *Plegadis ridgway* and White Ibis *E. albus*, all of which breed regularly. Visitors can also see Southern Lapwings *V. chilensis cayennensis*, Roseate

Spoonbills *Platalea ajaja*, a breeding group of Blue-winged Teal *A. discors*, Ringed Teal *Calonetta leucophrys*, Chilean Flamingos *P. chilensis* and two species of parrot, the Lilac-crowned Amazon *Amazona finschi* and Hyacinth Macaw *Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*, both of which breed fairly well in the park.

The next stop for most visitors is La Cité des perroquets - Parrot's city. This begins with a walk-through aviary housing a large breeding group of Australian Thick-knees *B. grallarius* - a species rarely seen anywhere else in France - living with Eclectus Parrots *Eclectus roratus polychloros*, Rainbow Lorikeets *Trichoglossus haematodus* and a large flock of Java Sparrows *P. oryzivora*. There is then a series of large and nicely landscaped aviaries housing mostly parrots, along with a few other tropical birds. Most of the species are kept in breeding pairs or groups and this includes some of the park's most valuable birds. The pair of Blue-throated Macaws *Ara glaucogularis* used to be the only pair of this species on public exhibition in France, but is now housed behind the scenes. One of the most interesting species currently on display in this section is the Critically Endangered Philippine or Red-vented Cockatoo *Cacatua haematuropygia*. The park was until 2008 responsible for the European Breeding Programme for this species and continues to house a breeding group. There is also a breeding pair of Hyacinth Macaws, a group of Ecuadorian or Lilacine Amazons *A. autumnalis lilacina*, one of the only known breeding groups of Lilac-crowned Amazons in France, and a breeding pair of Long-billed Corellas *C. tenuirostris*. Other species living in these aviaries include Greater Vasa Parrot *Coracopsis vasa*, Black-capped Lory *Lorius lory erythrothorax*, Sharp-tailed Conure *A. acuticauda*, Green-cheeked Amazon *A. viridigenalis*, Peach-fronted Conure *A. aurea*, Grey Parrot *Psittacus erithacus*, African Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula k. krameri*, Yellow-collared Macaw *Primolius auricollis* and Military Macaw *A. militaris mexicanus*. These aviaries also house a breeding pair of Australian Magpies *Gymnorhina hypoleuca*, a breeding pair of Laughing Kookaburras *Dacelo novaeguineae*, Black-headed Caiques *Pionites melanocephalus*, Galahs *Eolophus roseicapillus*, Barraband Parakeets *Polytelis swainsonii*, Red-headed or Jardine's Parrots *Poicephalus gulielmi*, Monk or Quaker Parakeets *Myiopsitta monachus*, Azure-winged Magpies *Cyanopica cyana*, Noble Macaws *Diopsittaca n. nobilis*, Grey-winged Trumpeters *Psophia crepitans*, Greater Necklaced Laughingthrushes *Garrulax pectoralis*, Black-necked Starlings *Gracupica nigricollis*, Scarlet Macaws *A. macao*, Laughing Doves *Streptopelia senegalensis*, Wattled Starlings *Creatophora cinerea* and a huge breeding group of Fischer's Lovebirds *Agapornis fischeri*.

In 2008, an area behind the parrot aviaries was designed where in late

spring and summer bird shows are held up to three times a day. These feature several exotic birds, ranging from parrots to ibises, geese and pelicans, flying free. Also in 2008, a new area of the park was opened dedicated to birds from the temperate and cold regions of South America. After walking through an area reminiscent of volcanic landscape in Argentina, visitors come to a fairly large enclosure housing Upland Geese *Chloephaga picta* and some Lesser or Darwin's Rheas *Rhea (Pterocnemia) pennata* bred at Parc Zoologique et Botanique de Mulhouse (Mulhouse Zoo). Then there is a huge exhibit with a large pool housing the park's breeding colony of about 60 Humboldt Penguins *Spheniscus humboldti*, which began breeding the first year that the exhibit opened. As is customary with most penguin exhibits these days, the pool has a side window through which the birds can be seen swimming underwater. At the end of this area there is a huge aviary occupied by a breeding pair of Andean Condors *Vultur gryphus* and a group of Harris's Hawks *Parabuteo unicinctus harrisi*.

After returning to the main pathway, visitors arrive at a group of very long enclosures with pools in them, and in these enclosures live most of the park's cranes along with various species of waterfowl. The most recent addition to the collection in this specific area is a pair of Wattled Cranes *Bugeranus carunculatus* sharing an enclosure with Cape Teal *A. capensis*. Other species to be found in these enclosures include Sarus Cranes *Grus a. antigone*, Greater Rheas *R. americana*, Southern Pochard *Netta erythrophthalma brunnea* - a duck which is rare in Europe - Laysan Teal *A. laysanensis*, Whooper Swans *Cygnus cygnus* and Andean Geese *C. melanoptera*.

At the far end of the park is an Australian section with, in the first enclosure, Emus *Dromaius novaehollandiae*, Australian Shelduck *Tadorna tadornoides*, Radjah Shelduck *T. radjah*, Chestnut Teal *A. castanea*, some Cape Barren or Cereopsis Geese *Cereopsis novaehollandiae*, a breeding pair of Black Swans *C. atratus* and some Maned Ducks *Chenonetta jubata*. The other, and most interesting part of the Australian area, consists of a very large walk-through aviary housing a diverse collection of birds, including a breeding group of Australian Shoveler *A. rhynchotis variegata* - a species which is very rare in European collections - Maned Ducks, a breeding group of Little Pied Cormorants *Phalacrocorax melanoleucos* - probably the only specimens in France - a group of Pennant's Parakeets *Platycerus elegans*, Emerald Doves *Chalcophaps indica*, Common Bronzewings *Phaps chalcoptera*, Diamond Doves *Geopelia cuneata*, Masked Lapwings *V. m. miles*, Eyton's or Plumed Whistling Ducks *D. eytoni* and a group of Straw-necked Ibis *Threskiornis spinicollis*. Also living in the aviary are Garganey *A. querquedula* - a northern migrant that occasionally reaches Australia - Eurasian Teal *A. c. crecca* and some Grey Partridges *Perdix perdix*.

On leaving the Australian zone, visitors find themselves a short distance from an observation deck from which it is possible to spend hours watching the local wild birds, especially waterbirds such as herons, ducks and grebe, roaming about, feeding and breeding on and around a lake and marsh known as - La petite Dombes. It is part of a large area of protected natural habitat which is a stronghold for many wild birds, including Red-crested Pochard *N. rufina*, Common Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Tufted Duck *A. fuligula*, Northern Pintail *Anas acuta*, Great Crested Grebe *Podiceps cristatus*, the rarely seen Black-necked Grebe *P. nigricollis*, and the European White Stork *Ciconia ciconia*. The Parc des Oiseaux is currently the only public animal park in France in which visitors can see such a wide variety of the local wildlife in its natural environment.

The main path leading out of La petite Dombes takes visitors to the birds of prey. A few large aviaries are visible from inside a building which has many posters, panels and other pedagogical (teaching/educational) devices. These aviaries are occupied by Great Grey Owls *Strix nebulosa lapponica*, Kestrels *Falco tinnunculus*, Himalayan Griffon *Gyps himalayensis* and Great Eagle-Owls *Bubo b. bubo*. Then there is a huge walk-through aviary in which several diurnal birds of prey are flying free and in which many of them breed. Birds in this aviary include Red Kites *Milvus milvus*, Black Kites *M. migrans*, Eurasian Black Vultures *Aegypius monachus*, Eurasian Griffon *G. f. fulvus*, Short-toed Eagles *Circaetus gallicus*, Common Buzzard *Buteo buteo*, Long-legged Buzzards *B. rufinus* and Egyptian Vultures *Neophron p. percnopterus*.

Almost half of the park's surface is occupied by a huge lake on which many wild birds can be seen, including Great Crested Grebe, Common Pochard and many other local species of duck, as well as Grey Herons *Ardea cinerea* and White Storks. This fantastic lake can be seen from almost everywhere in the park and the wild birds have become used to the presence of humans and are often very tame. Flower and fruit gardens have been created in which the wild birds come and forage. The park's efforts to promote and protect local wildlife are among the best of any of the large zoological collections in France.

There are a few walk-in enclosures in which there are some more waterfowl, many of which breed in these enclosures. Visitors can see Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus*, a species which cannot be seen in any of the French zoos, Philippine Ducks *A. luzonica*, Gadwall *A. strepera*, Carolina or American Wood Ducks *Aix sponsa*, Mandarin Ducks *A. galericulata*, Lesser White-fronted Geese *A. erythropus*, Red-breasted Geese *B. ruficollis*, Lesser Canada or Cackling Geese *B. hutchinsii minima*, Ross's Geese *A. rossii*, Spot-billed Ducks *A. p. poecilorhyncha*, Marbled

Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, Brazilian Teal *Amazonetta brasiliensis*, Ferruginous Ducks *Aythya nyroca*, Common Goldeneye *Bucephala clangula*, Common Eider *Somateria molissima*, Common Shelduck *T. tadorna* and many other species.

On the other side of the main path is a large enclosure which is landscaped, in which a female Southern or Double-wattled Cassowary *Casuarius casuarius* used to live until mid-2011, when she was transferred to the zoo at Mulhouse, to be paired with its lone male. The design of the enclosure, which currently houses Parma Wallabies *Macropus parma*, has been changed to accommodate Abyssinian Ground Hornbills *Bucorvus abyssinicus*.

The Jardin des oiseaux - Garden of birds - shows different ways of attracting and feeding local birds and encourages the public to care for and protect local wildlife.

The park's latest creation is an area called Terres de calaos - Lands of hornbills - consisting of a large enclosure which has been landscaped with artificial termite mounds, etc., to resemble an African savannah, along with two rows of medium-sized aviaries, each with a heated house. Living in the enclosure is an adult pair of Southern Ground Hornbills *B. leadbeateri*, a species which is now common in zoos and breeds well. While housed in the aviaries are African Grey Hornbills *Tockus n. nasutus*, Von der Decken's Hornbill *T. deckeni*, the Trumpeter Hornbill *Bycanistes (Ceratogymna) bucinator*, Silvery-cheeked Hornbills *B. (C.) brevis*, Blyth's or Plicated Hornbills *Rhyticeros plicatus*, Great Hornbill *Buceros bicornis*, Javan Rhinoceros Hornbill *B. rhinoceros silvestris*, Wrinkled Hornbills *Aceros (Rhyticeros) corrugatus* and Malayan Black Hornbills *Anthracoceros malayanus*, the last two being kept in France only here and at the Jardin d'oiseaux tropicaux. Red-crested Turacos and White-cheeked Turacos *T. leucotis* are also displayed in the hornbill aviaries. The park has France's second largest collection of hornbills - the largest collection being that of the Jardin d'oiseaux tropicaux at La Londe les Maures on the Mediterranean coast.

Parc des Oiseaux de Villars les Dombes is currently financing two in-situ conservation programmes, one for the Abyssinian Ground Hornbill and the other for the reintroduction and management of the population of Oriental Pied Hornbills *A. albirostris convexus* on Pulau Ubin, an island off the north-east of Singapore.

Another highlight of the park's conservation work is its successful breeding colony of Dalmatian Pelicans *Pelecanus crispus*, which breeds each year on islands in the lake on which it lives. The Parc des Oiseaux currently houses the largest captive breeding colony of this species and it is

among the most productive, annually producing young birds from which to develop a breeding programme for this species.

The next destination for visitors is a group of three aviaries housing Ocellated Laughingthrushes *G. ocellatus artemisiae* living with a pair of the rare Salvadori's Pheasant *Lophura inornata*, a pair of White-throated Laughingthrushes *G. albogularis* which are currently the only specimens on display in France, a pair of Edwards's Pheasants *L. edwardsii*, a group of Pied Imperial Pigeons *Ducula b. bicolor* and Black-throated Laughingthrushes *G. c. chinensis*.

The final exhibit and one of the most impressive is the huge and beautifully landscaped walk-through aviary called - Krabi - in which one finds a variety of waterbirds and some pheasants from Africa, Asia and Europe. The main theme of this exhibit is the protection of wetlands around the world. The list of species showcased in this amazing aviary includes: Great White Egret *Casmerodius a. albus*, Little Egret *Egretta g. garzetta*, Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis*, Himalayan Monal *Lophophorus impejanus*, Eurasian Spoonbill *P. leucorodia*, Carolina or American Wood Duck, Mandarin Duck, Mallard *A. platyrhynchos*, Grey Heron, Northern Bald Ibis or Waldrapp *Geronticus eremita*, Falcated Teal *A. falcata*, Madagascar Teal *A. bernieri* and Yellow-billed Stork *Mycteria ibis*.

This bird park - 'Made in France' - has not only the best avian collection in France, but is among the most beautiful bird parks in Europe, set as it is in an amazing landscape that includes a large nature reserve which gives the public the opportunity to observe many different species of wild birds, including some locally endangered species. The conservation and pedagogical (educational) work of the park's employees is certainly among the best known of any of the public animal collections in France.

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The author, who lives at Le Chesnay in France, was the recipient of the 2010 Dulcie Cooke Award for the excellent photographs illustrating his articles about the bird collections at Parc de Clères, Taipei Zoo and Weltvogelpark Walsrode. E-mail: pedroyayadrums@yahoo.com

NEWS & VIEWS

NEW SPECIES OF TURACO ADDED TO COLLECTION

The World of Birds Wildlife Sanctuary, Hout Bay, near Cape Town, has added Ross's Turaco *Musophaga rossae* to its collection. Visitors to Africa's largest bird park can now see 10 members of the turaco family - the others being the Violet *M. violacea*, Knysna *Tauraco corythaix*, Purple-crested *T. (Gallirex) porphyreolophus*, Green-crested or Guinea *T. persa*, Fischer's *T. fischeri* and Hartlaub's *T. hartlaubi*, along with the Bare-faced Go-away Bird *Corythaixoides personatus*, White-bellied Go-away Bird *C. leucogaster* and Eastern Plantain-eater *Crinifer zonurus*.

To learn more about the World of Birds, which has more than 3,000 birds and other animals belonging to some 400 different species housed in more than 100 spacious walk-through aviaries in a tropical garden setting, you can visit its website: www.worldofbirds.org.za

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ENDING ON A HIGH

By early October, a total of 1,223 parrots had been bred this year by the Loro Parque Fundación, Tenerife. A number of important species of lorries were bred during the year, including four Violet-necked *Eos squamata*, a Red Lory *E. bornea*, a Red-and-blue Lory *E. histrio*, two Blue-eared Lories *E. semilavata* and, after a break of several years, two Blue-streaked Lories *E. reticulata*. The ringing (banding) of a further two young Purple-bellied Lories *Lorius hypoinochrous devittatus* brought the number of young reared this year to 10. These will further help the fundación in its attempt to build up a self-sustaining captive-breeding population, which is presently being hampered by a significant excess of males.

Six Hyacinth Macaws *Anodorhynchus hyacinthus* were continuing to be reared either by their parents or were being hand-reared and a Moluccan Cockatoo *Cacatua moluccensis* was also being hand-reared and another was being reared by its parents. When the latter becomes independent it will, it is hoped, be integrated into the fundación's small flock of Moluccan Cockatoos.

In the spring, customs officials at Vienna Airport seized 74 Amazon parrot eggs, which a Slovakian was attempting to smuggle into the country from Jamaica. The eggs were taken to Tierpark Schönbrunn (Vienna Zoo) and placed in incubators and 54 chicks hatched, of which 45 - 23 Yellow-billed Amazons *Amazona collaria* and 22 Black-billed Amazons *A. agilis* - were reared to independence. Following Loro Parque Fundación's collaboration with its Austrian colleagues and in appreciation of its advice and practical help, Curator Simone Haderthauer and keeper Petra Stefan took to Loro

Parque in October, three pairs of Yellow-billed Amazons and three pairs of Black-billed Amazons, as part of a breeding programme which is being managed within the zoo community.

As part of a two-week internship, 20 veterinary students from Giessen University in Germany visited the fundación, where they attended lectures and acquired practical experience of zoo medicine.

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NEW CURATOR MAKES A START

Josef Lindholm commenced his duties as the new Curator of Birds at Tulsa Zoo on November 9th 2011, and expressed himself “delighted to be working with a team of seven enthusiastic and knowledgeable aviculturists.” The zoo was recently transferred from the direct management of the City of Tulsa to a newly incorporated non-profit making body which has plans to expand the collection. Arrangements are already being made to acquire a number of interesting native birds to coincide with the remodelling of the zoo’s famous North American Living Museum, which was opened in 1978.

There are presently 69 taxa of birds in the zoo collection. Josef was delighted to find that the pair of Scissor-tailed Flycatchers *Tyrannus forficatus* - The State Bird of Oklahoma - had produced a chick in 2010. It was sent to Oklahoma City Zoo and then onto the National Aviary in Pittsburgh. Josef believes that Tulsa Zoo, which in 1980 was the first zoo to breed the Orangequit *Euneonis campestris*, a species which is endemic to the Caribbean island of Jamaica, is the only zoo to have succeeded in breeding the Scissor-tailed Flycatcher in captivity.

Tulsa’s first Red-fronted Macaw *Ara rubrogenys* chick appears (according to ISIS) to be the only one produced in an American zoo in 2011, as do the two Plush-capped or Plush-crested Jays *Cyanocorax chrysops*. Josef said that Tulsa Zoo has a long history of success with the Plush-capped or Plush-crested Jay. He can clearly remember seeing two young with their parents in an indoor exhibit when he first visited Tulsa Zoo in 1984. Also, (according to ISIS) the Bali Starling *Leucopsar rothschildi* was one of only five hatched in US zoos in 2011 (the others were hatched at Toledo and Minnesota).

With the arrival of a pair of Madagascar Teal *Anas bernieri* from Great Plains Zoo, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Tulsa Zoo became one of a dozen or so US collections exhibiting this species. The birds, which remain the property of the Republic of Madagascar, are descendants of those imported in 2005 by Mike Lubbock’s Sylvan Heights Waterfowl Park & Eco-Center in North Carolina.

At Dallas World Aquarium (where Josef was Senior Aviculturist prior to taking up his appointment at Tulsa) the forty-first Andean Cock-of-the-

Rock *Rupicola peruviana* chick hatched in November and at the time Josef wrote (December 4th 2011), several more eggs were being incubated. Guianan Cocks-of-the-Rock *R. rupicola* and Capuchinbirds *Perissocephalus tricolor* were also hatched in 2011, as well as the aquarium's first troupials - presumably the Moriche *Icterus chryscephalus*. Capuchinbirds were sent to San Diego Zoo and in return the aquarium received Raggiana Birds-of-Paradise *Paradisaea raggiana*. A pair of White-winged Trumpeters *Psophia leucoptera* arrived at the aquarium from Perú some months before Josef's departure and is a species he had not previously seen in captivity.

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THE USUAL ROLLER COASTER

The 2011 breeding season was, writes Bernard Sayers, the "usual roller coaster of plentiful disasters and occasional successes", before adding that on the positive side the following were all successfully reared: three Black-winged Lories *Eos cyanogenia*, five Black-cheeked Lovebirds *Agapornis nigrigenis*, many wild-type grey Java Sparrows *Padda oryzivora*, two Lemon Doves *Aplopelia larvata*, four Sulawesi Ground Doves *Gallicolumba tristigmata*, 13 Triangular-spotted or Speckled Pigeons *Columba guinea*, two Chaco Owls *Strix chacoensis*, two Boobook Owls *Ninox boobook*, four Burrowing Owls *Athene cunicularia*, three White-faced Owls *Ptilopsis leucotis*, two Indian Scops Owls *Otus bakkamoena* and seven Tropical Screech Owls *Megascops choliba*.

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NATURAL HISTORY COURSES

The Field Studies Council (FSC), an environmental charity with over 65 years' experience of providing courses and fieldwork opportunities for people of all ages, has in 2012 a number of natural history courses available at different levels and all with expert tuition throughout. These will be available at its network of UK centres, which are all in stunning locations, often with unique wildlife.

The bird courses available can be viewed online by clicking onto the following link: <http://tinyurl.com/bm48elg> or alternatively you can view its e-brochure at: <http://view.digipage.net/?userpath=00000645/00015144/00070991>

Hard copies of the brochure and further information are available from: Mel Cousins, Field Studies Council, Head Office, Montford Bridge, Shrewsbury, SY4 1HW. Tel:01743 852118/E-mail: mel@field-studies-council.org/Website:www.field-studies-council.org/Twitter:www.twitter.com/fsc_news

MY PAL STEWART PYPER MEMORIES OF A FRIENDSHIP

by Mike Curzon

I first met Stewart in the early 1970s at a talk given by George Anderdon to Frome Cage Bird Society. It was the beginning of a firm friendship which, sadly, ended with Stewart's death in October.

In the early days of our friendship, Stewart came to Rode Tropical Bird Garden every Saturday after shopping with his mother. He would pick-up day-old chicks and bananas (always on the look-out for a bargain was Stewart) and any snippets of news and gossip - or, better still, scandal. He then began coming on the occasional zoo visit with me, when I went to collect or deliver birds. Also, we used to go, together with Martin Greene, to the Avicultural Society talks and wine and cheese evenings at the Linnaean Society in London. It was great to travel there with Stewart, because he knew his way around London - in fact he always seemed to know his way around everywhere. Stewart must surely have been the prototype for the first satnav. Whenever we went anywhere together, such as to an Avicultural Society day out, he always knew unerringly which road to take and invariably we arrived half-an-hour early, as Stewart liked to ensure that we had time for coffee and biscuits before the meeting began.

On the society's European trips, Stewart always kept everyone together, apart from Colin Jackson, who he used to give up on about halfway around. Without Stewart, I doubt that Colin will make it past the first aviary. I used to call Stewart, Shep, because of his sheepdog-like efforts to keep us all together. I miss being able to phone Stewart and bounce ideas off him, and miss his calls to me asking what I thought about various things. I also miss his evening visits after he had been to his Uncle John's for dinner and then came around to us for cheese and biscuits - always complaining if there were no digestive biscuits. Then we would share a glass of red wine or port before he dashed back home to Nunney. I will really miss my pal Stewart.

WE WILL MISS HIS LAUGHTER

Stewart was a well-known and popular figure at The Bear Inn at Holwell. He supported a number of charities and among his many loves was real ale and the pub provided two barrels of Funky Monkey, one of Stewart's favourites, for a "farewell party." For every pint sold, £1 (approx. US\$1.50) was donated to the Church Roof Fund. This raised £150 (approx. US\$225).



Chabannes, Pierre de. 2011. "A Bird Extravaganza With A French Accent." *The Avicultural magazine* 117(4), 174–188.

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