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AVICULTURAL SOCIETY SPRING SOCIAL MEETING AT NEWQUAY ZOO

by Nigel Hewston

The second venue on our weekend visit to westcountry collections was Newquay Zoo, where we spent a very interesting morning in the company of Senior Bird Keeper Gary Ward. The zoo is one of a number of leisure attractions situated in a municipal park. Having started many years ago as a privately-owned seasonal tourist attraction, it was later taken over by the local council before being acquired by the Herbert Whitley Trust, which also runs Paignton Zoo and Living Coasts at Torquay.

The zoo is compact, but packs a lot into a small site, with an interesting range of bird and other species, housed in a mixture of modern enclosures and older ones, a number of which have been adapted to good effect to house, and breed, species other than those for which they were built.

Birds are immediately apparent on entry, with a lake which is being developed as an African wetland exhibit. Species here include West African Crowned Crane *Balearica p.pavonina*, White Storks *Ciconia ciconia* and Comb Ducks *Sarkidiornis m.melanotos*, and is also currently home to Hooded Mergansers *Lophodytes cucullatus*. Continuing the African theme, which also included a new area for hoofstock, was a recently-built aviary housing Napoleon Weavers *Euplectes afer* and Blacksmith Plovers *Vanellus armatus*. Elsewhere and I think uniquely among UK zoos, there is an offshow breeding facility for waxbills, fronted by an aviary exhibit. Results here have been mixed, but the zoo is determined to continue working with difficult species such as Purple Grenadiers *Uraeginthus ianthinogaster*, which are rarely seen in public collections.

Birds from other continents are also well represented, with a large, well planted aviary shared by Black Hornbills *Anthracoceros malayanus* and

Red-billed Blue Magpies *Urocissa erythrorhynchos*, the latter having hatched five chicks on the day of our visit. Nearby, a fine pair of Channel-billed Toucans *Ramphastos vitellinus* occupied another aviary, and had shown signs of breeding behaviour. Parrots in groups are a nice feature of the collection, with Ecuador Amazons *Amazona lilacina*, Scarlet Macaws *Ara macao*, Greater Vasa Parrots *Coracopsis vasa* and Cape Parrots *Poicephalus robustus* all looking good, and mostly in planted enclosures. Bearded Reedlings *Panurus biarmicus* were another unusual exhibit encountered in a small aviary overlooking the children's farm.

The tropical house was a gem, not least because of the number of species breeding in what appeared to be a relatively small free flight area. Blue-crowned Laughingthrush *Dryonastes courtoisi*, Grosbeak Starlings *Scissirostrum dubium*, White-rumped Shamas *Copsychus malabaricus*, Pekin Robins *Leiothrix lutea*, Chestnut-backed Thrushes *Zoothera dohertyi*, Pied Imperial Pigeons *Ducula bicolor* and Roulroul *Rollulus rouloul* all breed successfully. Despite good viewing galleries on two levels, there were species we failed to see in this well-planted exhibit, which also housed the only Hoffmann's two-toed sloth *Choloepus hoffmanni* remaining in the UK. The house also included the zoo's reptile enclosures.

Few of our group had visited the zoo previously, and all left impressed not only with our guide's knowledge and enthusiasm, but with a well laid out and maintained zoo making the most of its site and collection.

* * *

THE SOCIETY'S SUMMER TEA PARTY AT BIRDWORLD BIRD PARK

UK members will already have received an invitation to the society's summer tea party at Birdworld Bird Park, Holt Pound, Nr. Farnham, GU10 4LD on Sunday 22nd June, 2014 from 2.00 – 6.00pm.

There will be a chance to walk around the collection, enjoy tea and a raffle in a marquee, meet old friends, and make new ones. The event has also been publicised to non-members, as we hope it will be an opportunity to introduce new, young members and potential members to the Society, and to show them what we do.

Ticket application details are on the website. www.avisoc.co.uk

RAYMOND SAWYER SCHOLARSHIP

Aims & background

Raymond Sawyer (1924 - 2012) was probably the best-known British aviculturist of his generation. Learning his craft as a young man, he became a very successful exhibitor and later breeder of many difficult species. His large and varied collection and beautifully designed and presented aviaries were an inspiration to many younger aviculturists. He was President of The Avicultural Society from 2007 until his death.

The Avicultural Society would like to ensure that Raymond's legacy continues to inspire young aviculturists and help them to develop their skills. It has therefore established the Raymond Sawyer Scholarship, which will be funded from Raymond's generous bequest to the society. It will support one young birdkeeper each year on one of the excellent avian courses run by the Durrell Conservation Academy at the world famous Durrell Wildlife Park on Jersey, and will be awarded in partnership with The Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and Cage & Aviary Birds magazine.

Applications will be open to amateur aviculturists, professional birdkeepers at zoos or other institutions, or aspiring birdkeepers studying animal management with a view to developing a career in aviculture. The Avicultural Society is an international organisation, and applications will be welcome from anywhere in the world. The society is particularly keen to nurture the talents of a younger generation of aviculturists, so the scholarship is open exclusively to applicants under 25 years of age.

Rules

The scholarship will be awarded annually at the discretion of The Avicultural Society.

The scholarship will be awarded to one student under the age of 25 at the time of the course. Application will be open to amateur, professional or student aviculturists living anywhere in the world.

The scholarship will cover course fees and accommodation charges at the Durrell Academy. If the student does not wish to take advantage of accommodation at Durrell, the scholarship will cover course fees only. No payment will be made for travel or other expenses.

The scholarship will include one year's membership of the Avicultural Society.

The scholarship will fund attendance at either the "Conservation Breeding and Husbandry of Birds" course or the "Avian Egg Incubation" workshop at the Durrell Conservation Academy. Should both courses run in the same year, The Avicultural Society will decide which course the scholarship will apply



The late Raymond Sawyer after whom the scholarship is named.

to. Should neither course run, any award for attendance on an alternative course shall be at the discretion of The Avicultural Society.

Applications must be made to Cage & Aviary Birds magazine. The editor will draw up a shortlist of suitable applicants. The successful applicant will be chosen from this list in consultation with representatives of The Durrell Conservation Academy and The Avicultural Society.

Applications must be made on the official application form and must be received by the published closing date. The application form is available to download at www.avisoc.co.uk or www.cageandaviarybirds.co.uk . Please print, complete and return to the address on the form.

BOOK REVIEW

TOUCANS OF THE AMERICAS

Toucans of the Americas (*Tucanos das Americas*) will delight all bird lovers for the clarity and accuracy of the paintings by Eduardo Brettas. Never have I seen such gorgeous illustrations! His fine brush work exactly captures the texture of feathers and every wing covert, the crinkly skin around the eye and even every eye lash.

The text faces the illustration of each species and appears in Portuguese and English. Brazilian author Herculano Alvarenga, who has a degree in medicine and a PhD in Science, has produced a short text (just right) for each species, and an introduction that includes the topics of evolution, distribution and behaviour. This text is superimposed on a background of a green-tinted rainforest photo which makes it a little difficult to read; this is my only criticism of this book. The species text is on a yellow background which is very easy on the eye.

Every species and most sub-species are illustrated against a subtle background of tree branches and leaves and/or berries. I suspect that some people will be tempted to break up the book and frame the illustrations. I normally think of this as a sin but in this case I could forgive them. The page size, 29cm x 33cm, is perfect for this purpose.

The end papers are extremely beautiful. I am tempted to photocopy and frame them. They depict the head and beak of every toucan illustrated. At a glance you can see the incredible array of beauties in this iconic tropical family.

The Index at the beginning is in the form of a miniature version of the big plates (44 in all). This also forms a rapid identification guide. This is an outstanding work and will be treasured by all lovers of toucans and bird art.

Published by M.Pontual. Rio de Janeiro, 2004. Currently available from NHBS for £34.50 plus postage.

Rosemary Low

NEWS & VIEWS

A NEW SPECIES OF TAILORBIRD FROM CAMBODIA

A new species of tailorbird from Cambodia, which remarkably even occurs within the limits of Phnom Penh has been described in an article published early online from the forthcoming issue of *Forktail*, the Journal of Asian Ornithology, published by the Oriental Bird Club.

A team of scientists with the Wildlife Conservation Society, BirdLife International, and other groups have discovered a new species of bird with distinct plumage and a loud call living not in some remote jungle, but in a capital city of 1.5 million people.



James Eaton

The previously undescribed Cambodian Tailorbird *Orthotomus chaktomuk*.

Called the Cambodian Tailorbird *Orthotomus chaktomuk*, the previously undescribed species was found in Cambodia's urbanized capital Phnom Penh and several other locations just outside of the city including a construction site. It is one of only two bird species found solely in Cambodia. The other, the Cambodian Laughingthrush *Garrulax ferrarius*, is restricted to the remote Cardamom Mountains.

The small grey bird with a rufous cap and black throat lives in dense, humid lowland scrub in Phnom Penh and other sites in the floodplain. Its scientific name 'chaktomuk' is an old Khmer word meaning four-faces,

perfectly describing where the bird is found: the area centred on Phnom Penh where the Tonle Sap, Mekong and Bassac Rivers come together.

Only tiny fragments of floodplain scrub remain in Phnom Penh, but larger areas persist just outside the city limits where the Cambodian Tailorbird is abundant. The authors say that the bird's habitat is declining and recommend that the species is classified as Near Threatened under the IUCN's Red List. Agricultural and urban expansion could further affect the bird and its habitat. However, the bird occurs in Baray Bengal Florican Conservation Area, where WCS is working with local communities and the Forestry Administration to protect the Bengal Florican and other threatened birds.

The last two decades have seen a sharp increase in the number of new bird species emerging from Indochina, mostly due to exploration of remote areas. Newly described birds include various babbler species from isolated mountains in Vietnam, the bizarre Bare-faced Bulbul from Lao PDR and the Mekong Wagtail.

Steve Zack, WCS Coordinator of Bird Conservation, said, "Asia contains a spectacular concentration of bird life, but is also under sharply increasing threats ranging from large scale development projects to illegal hunting. Further work is needed to better understand the distribution and ecology of this exciting newly described species to determine its conservation needs."

* * *

MARY ROSE ROWS

June 7, 2014 an epic 90 day journey begins for birds. Mary Rose from Chirping Central Conservation Fund will be rowing almost 3000 miles of the Pacific Ocean as a participant in the Great Pacific Race to raise funds and awareness for bird conservation. Starting out from Monterey Bay, California and rowing to Honolulu, Hawaii, Mary will be rowing solo across the ocean with all funds raised to benefit the most endangered birds on this planet. It is Mary's hope to be able to raise \$1 million to directly benefit on the ground conservation efforts. To see more about this effort please visit www.MaryRows.com where you will be able to experience the journey through video, blog posts and other updates. Chirping Central Conservation Fund is a nonprofit entity and donations may be made via the [MaryRows.com](http://www.MaryRows.com) website. The Fund's request for proposals is also available from this site. Proposals are due May 15 for funding from this race for birds.

* * *

THE AVICULTURAL MAGAZINE VOLUME 120

This issue marks the completion of vol. 119 for 2013. The next magazine you receive, vol. 120 no.1, will have a new look. The most obvious change will be a full colour cover featuring a high quality photograph, though Malcolm Ellis's lovely line drawing of a Bali Mynah will still have a place.

We will also be changing our printing arrangements. This is the last issue to be prepared for printing by Data Publishing Service. For those readers not familiar with DPS, it is actually the business identity of Daniel Shearing, who has been formatting and arranging printing of the magazine for most of the last twenty years. It is Daniel's partnership with Malcolm Ellis, and more recently Martin Greene, that has given us the high-quality magazine we have enjoyed over that period. It would be difficult to imagine anyone with a longer association with The Avicultural Society – not only is Daniel a longstanding member, but his father worked for Alfred Ezra at Foxwarren Park. We are very grateful for Daniel's expertise and hard work for the society over many years.

Giving the magazine a more attractive, interesting and modern exterior is a major step forward and will make it more likely to attract new readers, but we intend to maintain the high quality of content that members are accustomed to. Another important step forward would be to publish the magazine on time, and to help us achieve this, vol. 120 will consist of two issues only. This will enable us to complete vol. 120 by the end of this year, after which we plan to return to the usual four issues per volume. This will inevitably disappoint avid readers of the magazine, but timely publication was one of the main issues raised in responses to the members questionnaire, and this one-off measure seems the only realistic way to achieve this.

* * *

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