

BREEDING THE TOCO TOUCAN *Ramphastos toco* AND BLACK-NECKED ARACARI *Pteroglossus aracari* AT WELTVOGELPARK WALSRODE

by Jürgen Vielguth, Kerstin Kirchhöfel, Timo Allner
and Anne Hoppmann

Breeding toucans, araçaris and toucanets (birds of the Ramphastidae family) in captivity remains a relatively rare event. At Weltvogelpark Walsrode we have been working with these birds since the park first opened. The Toco Toucan *Ramphastos toco* is the 'heraldic bird' of Weltvogelpark Walsrode. It was chosen as the logo of Vogelpark Walsrode, the name by which the park was previously known, and the Toco Toucan continues to figure on our flyers, posters and entrance tickets. We were the first zoological institution in the world to breed toucans. This was in 1965 just a few years after the park first opened, when we succeeded in breeding the Green-billed Toucan *R. dicolorus* for the first time. Four young were successfully reared by their parents and a detailed description of the breeding was published in the park's *Annual Report* for that year.

In January 2010, five species of Ramphastidae arrived at the park from Guyana, South America. Having successfully completed quarantine, the different pairs were set up on and off-show. After having been here for only a year, some of the pairs showed pronounced interest in the nest boxes and displayed courtship and mating behaviour. Pairs of two of the species, the Toco Toucan and Black-necked Araçari *Pteroglossus aracari atricollis*, have since bred successfully, with young of both species having fledged in July 2011.

The Toco Toucan is found in the eastern parts of South America from Guyana southwards to Paraguay and northern Argentina. Generally, it lives at the edge of forests, near streams and rivers, in habitats with scattered trees and on the savannah and in plantations. The largest member of the toucan family, it is the only species that prefers more open habitats in preference to rainforest. It feeds mainly on fruits and insects and may use its large bill to rob the nests of other species and take their eggs and young - although recent studies on the Pantanal, show this to be exceptional behaviour (R. Watson pers. comm.). The Toco Toucan usually lays a clutch of two to four eggs, which both sexes take turns to incubate for 17-18 days. At the beginning, the chicks are fed mainly on insects, then as they grow older they are fed more and more fruits, as well. They fledge after 43-52 days.

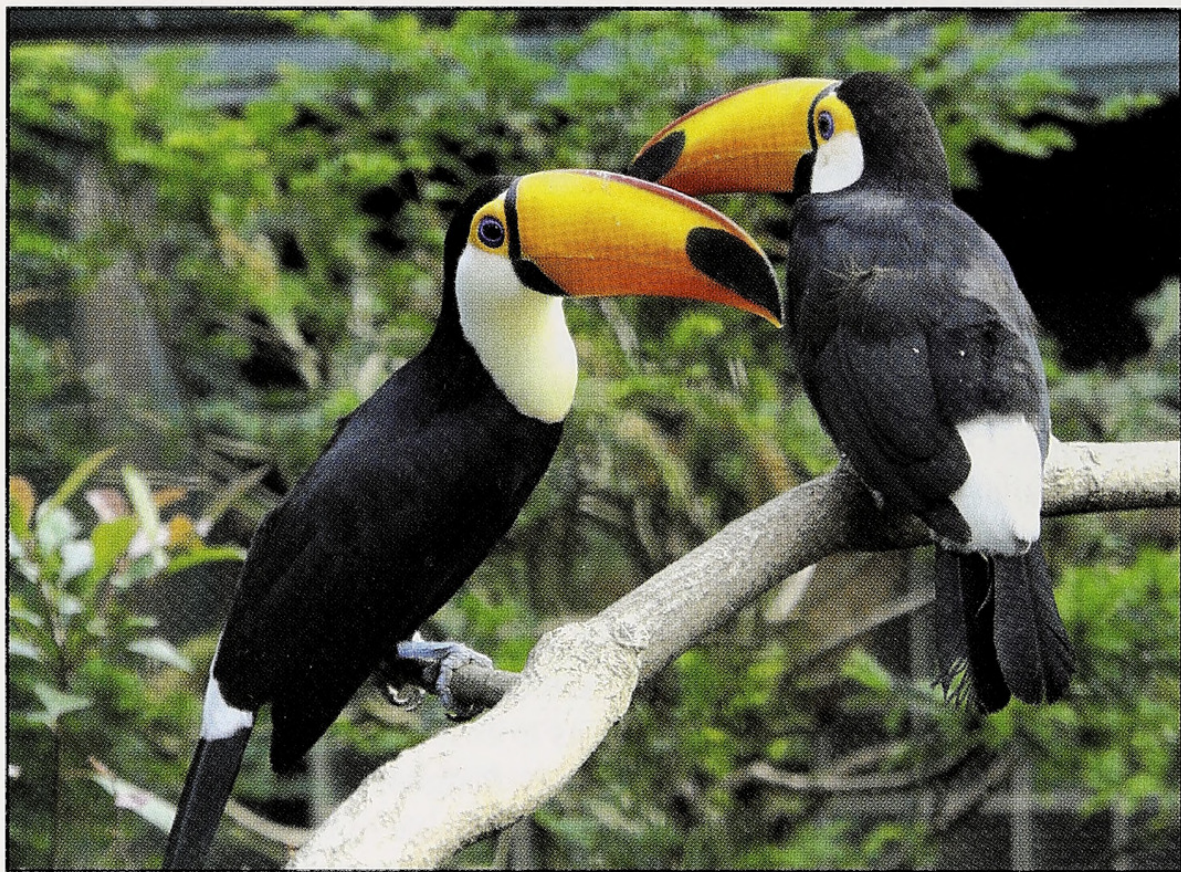
In spring 2010, one pair of young Toco Toucans was placed in a large, densely planted enclosure in the pheasantry - on show and thus visible to

visitors to the park. In May, the following year (2011), the pair was already showing great interest in the nest box, which was made from the base of a tree trunk. This was placed at a slight angle by the back wall of the outside enclosure. To further stimulate the pair, before the beginning of the breeding season, the amount of protein in the diet was increased and it was enriched with additional vitamins. Relatively early on the pair showed territorial behaviour and behaved aggressively towards other birds using the upper branches of the enclosure. Therefore, the other birds were removed leaving the two Toco Toucans the sole occupants of the enclosure.

On June 6th 2011, bird keepers in the tropical section found two eggshells outside the nest box. So as not to disturb the brooding birds, cleaning and maintenance were minimised. We were unsure how many young were in the nest box and it was not until the end of June that we first heard begging sounds coming from inside the nest box. While the young were growing up, the parents removed the droppings from the nest box. The pair was provided with fresh food throughout the day so as to ensure that the young birds had sufficient food to eat. Shortly before they fledged the beak of at least one of the young birds and then the whole body of one of the youngsters could be seen at the entrance to the nest box.

The first young toucan left the nest box on July 21st 2011. One day later a second youngster fledged and a third youngster was seen for the first time at the entrance to the nest box. The staff were very proud and happy about this, as nobody had believed that there were three young Toco Toucans in the nest box. The third youngster fledged on July 25th. One could see that the young toucans differed from each other in body size but, nonetheless, they were all able to fly from tree to tree. Upon fledging they flew directly to the perches in the enclosure and began investigating their surroundings. They were never seen to enter the nest box again and, even when it rained, remained in the outside enclosure. On July 30th the oldest of the three young was seen at the food dish feeding by itself. The young resembled their parents, except that they had a smaller and duller coloured beak and duller coloured plumage. Weltvogelpark Walsrode's first ever parent-reared Toco Toucans, they were in very good body and feather condition and from the beginning were very alert and curious. They were not fearful of the keepers or the visitors.

The main conditions needed to successfully breed toucans are a compatible pair and a suitable nest box which is acceptable to the pair. We use nest boxes made from the bases of tree trunks which are specially produced for the park. These are half filled with wood shavings. Here at Weltvogelpark Walsrode we always try to let the parents rear their own young. We believe that if they are able to follow their natural breeding behaviour,



Adult Toco Toucans *Ramphastos toco*.



The first young Toco Toucan fledged on July 21st, the second a day later, and the third on July 25th.



The four newly-fledged young Black-necked Araçaris with one of the parents (far left).

this will contribute greatly to their welfare. Furthermore, the young toucans are able to socialise with their parents and this increases the probability that they will later succeed in breeding and rearing their own young. Toucans which are hand-reared can be highly imprinted on humans, making it less likely that when the time comes, they will have the necessary know-how to rear their own young.

Two species of araçari, the Black-necked and the Green Araçari *P. viridis*, are represented in the Weltvogelpark Walsrode collection and have bred successfully. The Black-necked Araçari occurs from north-east South America (eastern Venezuela) southwards to south-east Brazil. It inhabits lowland rainforest, as well as gallery forest (forest bordering streams and rivers) on the savannah and plantations of fructiferous trees such as papaya. This araçari lays a clutch of two to four eggs, which both sexes take turns to incubate for 16-17 days. When first hatched the young are naked and have greyish coloured skin. They are fed by both parents - partly on regurgitated food. The young fledge after approximately 40 days.

At almost the same time as the Toco Toucans were breeding, a pair of Black-necked Araçaris also began breeding. This pair too, which was also housed on view to visitors, had the amount of protein in the diet increased and additional vitamins added at the beginning of the breeding season. This pair also became very territorial and the other birds sharing the enclosure were removed and housed in other aviaries. From mid-June, the pair was

observed to be spending most of the time in the nest box but, on June 20th, was seen in the enclosure feeding and then directly returning to the nest box. Later we could hear increased begging sounds coming from inside the nest box, but had no idea how many young were in the nest. Eventually, a small beak was seen at the entrance to the nest and, on July 20th, the first juvenile was seen leaning out of the nest box. On July 31st, three juveniles fledged, followed a day later by a fourth juvenile.

In contrast to the Toco Toucans, the four young aracarís left the nest box at almost the same time and, during the first weeks after fledging, returned to the nest box at night. Another difference was that in comparison to the young Toco Toucans, the young aracarís were highly active. Aracarís are lively characters and even the adults are considerably more active and agile than the much larger Toco Toucan. Flying ability-wise, they were similar - the young aracarís and young Toco Toucans both flew directly from perch to perch in their enclosures. The adult birds were very caring towards their young and never let them out of their sight. The young were fed by both parents, who tirelessly collected food from the inside enclosure and brought it out to the young. Apart from their smaller body size and smaller, duller coloured beak, the young resembled the adult birds.

This year Weltvogelpark Walsrode in northern Germany celebrates the 50th Anniversary of its opening. Website: www.weltvogelpark.de/E-mail: anne.hoppmann@weltvogelpark.de

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NEW UK RECORD KEEPER

Simon Matthews has taken over Dave Coles's *First Breeding Records For Birds Reared To Independence Under Controlled Conditions In The United Kingdom*. All future enquiries regarding first breedings in the UK should be addressed to: Simon Matthews, Senior Aviary Keeper and ARKS Representative, The Rothschild Foundation, Waddesdon Manor Aviary, Waddesdon, near Aylesbury, Buckinghamshire HP18 0JH. E-mail: Simon.Matthews@nationaltrust.org.uk/Tel: 01296 6532

A FINAL NOTE ON THE DRAKENSBERG SISKIN

Pseudochloroptila symonsi

by Neville Brickell and Trevor Konigkramer

When we previously wrote about this siskin (Brickell, 1986; Brickell & Konigkramer, 2000), it had yet to be successfully bred in captivity. We described the hatching of nestlings in an aviary belonging to one of the authors (T.K.), but on that occasion both nestlings disappeared within two days, having possibly been taken by an alien species of gecko, which had invaded our coastal towns and cities and driven out the indigenous Striped Skink *Mabuya striata* (Brickell & Konigkramer, 2000).

The pair was housed in a large aviary and nested in an approximately one-third-open-fronted nest box measuring 12cm x 16cm x 14cm (approx. 4¾in x 6¼in x 5½in). The nest was built mostly of coir, in preference to various grasses and, when completed, the top of the nest was level with the lip at the front of the box, enabling the sitting female to have a clear view of the approach to the nest. Two eggs were laid and incubated by the female for 17 days. The nestlings had reddish-pink skin and creamy coloured down on the head.

One of us (T.K.) discovered four nest sites in the wild in Lesotho in February 2000. One nest, which had been abandoned, consisted of fine dry grasses and tendrils and was lined with fine grasses and four dried leaves. The nest measured 90mm in diameter x 55mm deep on the outside and the inside (the cup) measured 58mm in diameter x 35mm deep. A second nest, also by the Khatse River, contained three eggs, one of which measured 18mm x 13mm and, like the two laid in the aviary, differed very little from those described by Mackworth-Praed and Grant (1963) as: "white with fine brown speckling and occasional larger spots of brown." Maclean (1993) described the eggs as: "white to pale greenish blue, sparingly spotted with brown and grey mainly at the thick end." Photos of a nest and the siskin's habitat by the Khatse River in Lesotho, along with colour photos of the male and female Drakensberg Siskin, were included with our article published in 2000.

In November of the 2003/2004 breeding season, aviary pair A produced a clutch of three white eggs with fine brown speckling, mainly at the thick end. An incubation period of 17 days and a nestling period of 19 days were recorded. Pair B produced a clutch of four eggs in January, for which an incubation period of 16 days was recorded, with a nestling period of 20 days.

The successful breeding occurred in a budgerigar nest box which was filled with earth to the rim of the entrance hole. It was lined with no more



Trevor Konigkramer

The chick begs the male for food.

than two dried seeding heads of Guinea Grass *Panicum maximum*. Two pale greenish-blue eggs, spotted with purplish-brown, were laid and incubated by the female alone for 19 days. Only one of the eggs hatched and the chick was raised to adulthood by both parents.

All of the captive birds have since been released on the border of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa and Lesotho.

Confined to the Drakensberg mountain range in the eastern Cape, northern KwaZulu-Natal, north-east Free State and Lesotho, where it inhabits montane heathlands, shrublands and grasslands, this siskin is treated now as a full species, rather than as a subspecies of the Cape Siskin *P. totta*, hence it was previously listed as *Serinus totta symonsi*.

References

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- Maclean, G. L. 1993. Roberts' Birds of Southern Africa. The Trustees of the John Voelcker Bird Book Fund, Cape Town.

Neville Brickell, who lives in Durban, South Africa, says that the government there plan to bring in stiff new laws on the keeping of indigenous birds. There is a nature reserve outside his window and, as he was writing to me, he could hear two Purple-crested Turacos (Louries) Tauraco (Gallirex) porphyreolophus calling to their mates in the tall trees below where they feed next to a bowling green. - Ed.

BOOK REVIEW

BIRD SENSE

Prof. Tim Birkhead has written another book about birds that is scientific yet a pleasure to read and contains a wealth of information and insights relating to the behaviour of birds.

Although *Bird Sense: What It's Like to Be a Bird* is about the senses of birds, it is not a dry academic volume and includes detours into the author's travels and stories relating to his and other peoples' personal experiences of both wild and captive birds.

The format and chapter headings: Seeing, Hearing, Touch, Taste, Smell, Magnetic Sense and Emotion, might suggest that this is an academic text book. In that it covers so much of the history of the science of bird senses, it could certainly assist in this purpose, but is clearly aimed at and able to reach a much wider audience. The enquiring readers' needs are met by a notes section and extensive bibliography and a glossary assists with technical terms which may be less familiar to some readers.

"Buggered is how most New Zealanders describe their bird fauna and it is", to quote the first line of the preface, which whilst perhaps not setting the tone for the rest of the book, does indicate just how accessible this book is. We get good science, the most up to date thinking and theories, combined with a reader experience more akin to a compelling storybook.

Katrina van Grouw's pencil illustrations, which are frontispieces to each chapter, are excellent and enjoyable. At times the scientist in me would have liked more illustrations related to the structure of sense organs and the birder in me would have enjoyed more illustrations of some of the more exciting birds. However, this would have interrupted the text and may have distracted from the read.

I could not help but feel envious when reading of the author's experiences in New Zealand where he saw Kakapos, in Ecuador where he saw Oilbirds and in the swamps of Florida where he saw Pileated Woodpeckers whilst searching for the Holy Grail - the presumed extinct Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Birders' tales indeed and stories here and there about other engaging ornithologists add additional interest to the book.

So do birds feel envy, pain, fear or pleasure? Well there is evidence suggesting some birds may experience pain, fear and pleasure. Some of these questions are taken up in the chapter on emotions, and others in the chapter on touch. For ourselves this involves the appreciation and bringing together of so many senses - both emotional and physical. Tim Birkhead suggests that the brief touch of a "cloacal kiss" for many birds may suggest a

shorter and lesser experience. However, other birds including the Red-billed Buffalo Weaver, copulate for a much longer period. He describes how one of his research students stimulated a male buffalo weaver and brought it to ecstatic orgasm by stroking its abdomen.

Most fascinating is the fact that the eyes of some birds have two foveas (sensitive areas on their retinas where light is focused), the functions of which are to enable the bird to have excellent distant vision and good close vision, with one fovea for each purpose. Falcons and shrikes are two groups of birds which have two foveas and we learn how Dutch birdcatchers once employed shrikes to assist in detecting and catching falcons.

Perhaps as fascinating is the fact that birds may see differently with their left and right eyes and use these for different tasks. Even more challenging to understand is not only that some birds can sense magnetic fields but that with one species, experimental work indicates this is sensed through the bird's right eye. How weird is that?

There are various theories to explain the amazing ability of birds to navigate, these include smell, sight and learning landmarks, the use of a sun compass and a star compass or combinations of these. In order to navigate birds need both a map to determine where they are and a compass to determine the direction which they should travel. Many birds, especially oceanic seabirds, have a well developed sense of smell that may assist their navigation and this is perhaps more surprisingly also true of homing pigeons. Other theories attach greater importance to birds using vision or having a magnetic sense. Recent experimental work suggests that the European Robin requires both visual and magnetic senses through its right eye to provide the compass direction needed to navigate. This may then be used in combination with a map detecting the strength of the magnetic field by providing magnetite receptors in the beak.

Are you still with me? This is really amazing stuff and although a theory that remains controversial this, as with all science, must be retested and validated. If this and similar questions about bird behaviour excite you as much as they do me, then I can really recommend this book.

Bird Sense: What It's Like to Be a Bird by Tim Birkhead, with illustrations by Katrina van Grouw, 265 pages, hardback, is published by Bloomsbury Publishing, London, Berlin, New York & Sydney. ISBN: 978-1408-2013-1. It is also available as an e-book. ISBN: 978-1408-2871-7. Price £16.99.

Roger Wilkinson

NEWS & VIEWS

AN EXTRAORDINARY SUCCESS STORY

The world's largest bird park, Weltvogelpark Walsrode (formerly Vogelpark Walsrode) in Germany, celebrates its 50th Anniversary this year. To mark the occasion, many new attractions are being unveiled including a new hummingbird breeding centre.

As mentioned earlier (p.32), it was the first collection in the world to breed toucans, when it succeeded in breeding four young Green-billed Toucans *Ramphastos dicolorus* in 1965, a few years after the opening of the park.

Other species bred for the first time at Weltvogelpark Walsrode include the Greater Bird-of-Paradise *Paradisaea apoda*, Secretary Bird *Sagittarius serpentarius*, Giant Coua *Coua gigas*, Blue Coua *C. caerulea*, Knobbed Hornbill *Aceros cassidix* and Silvery-cheeked Hornbill *Bycanistes brevis*.

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A SAD FAREWELL

As Weltvogelpark Walsrode celebrates its 50th Anniversary (see first news item), another famous collection, that at Leeds Castle Aviary in Kent, has closed. According to the official guidebook it was opened by HRH Princess Alexandra on May 25th 1988. Lady Baillie, the owner of Leeds Castle, who died in 1974, had introduced Black Swans *Cygnus atratus* onto the moat in the 1930s, but they appear not to have survived the Second World War and a new pair arrived in the early 1950s. Lady Baillie also kept Australian finches and was particularly fond of Australian parakeets and the blue and yellow mutations of the Ring-necked Parakeet *Psittacula krameri*. Her first bird keeper was Peter Taylor, who had previously been a gardener on the estate.

The first Curator of Birds, David Franks, who I believe was an American who had previously worked at either San Diego Zoo or Wild Animal Park, or possibly both, described progress on the construction of The (new) Aviary (in reality a series of aviaries) in the *Avicultural Magazine* Vol.92, No.1, pp.50-51 (1986) and in Vol.95, No.2, pp.100-101 (1989), Ken Lawrence described the society's first visit in the summer of 1988.

Three notable UK first breedings were achieved in the 1990s, that of Von der Decken's Hornbill *Tockus deckeni* in 1990, Fischer's Turaco *Tauraco fischeri* in 1992 and the Crowned Hornbill *T. alboterminatus* in 1997. They also succeeded in breeding the Toco Toucan *Ramphastos toco*. It is difficult now to remember back to a time when Laura Gardner was not Curator of Birds at Leeds Castle Aviary, so closely is she associated with it and its

breeding successes and for her work with the Blue-crowned Laughingthrush *Dryonastes courtoisi*, both here and in China. After more than 23 years, however, Laura has now left Leeds Castle and I am sure members will want to send their best wishes to her for the future.

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RARE DUCKLINGS HATCHED

Eighteen Madagascar Pochard *Aythya innotata* ducklings have been hatched in Madagascar. The birds are part of a captive-breeding programme overseen by staff from the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust (formerly Jersey Zoo) and the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT).

This species was until recently thought to be extinct, but then a small surviving population was discovered on Lake Matsaborimena. This appears to be far from ideal for them and initial investigations suggest there is not enough food for the birds and this may explain why so few ducklings survive. Some potentially more suitable lakes have been identified, but the relocation of the species to these lakes will depend on the support of the local community, many of whom earn their livelihood from fishing.

Contrary to some reports, these are not the first captive-bred Madagascar Pochard ducklings. This species was bred by Jean Delacour in France and was also bred in the Netherlands and the UK in the 1930s. The parents were presumably birds collected by C. S. Webb on Lake Alaotra - who stated that it was confined to that lake.

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AMONG THE FIRST TO BREED

Lorikeets are always among the first species to begin breeding at Loro Parque and by mid-February, Rainbow Lorikeets *Trichoglossus haematodus moluccanus*, Forsten's Lorikeet *T. h. forsteni* and the pale-headed/blue-headed subspecies *T. h. caeruleiceps*, the Scaly-breasted Lorikeet *T. chlorolepidotus* and Goldie's Lorikeet *Psitteuteles goldiei*, as well as the Yellow-streaked Lory *Chalcopsitta sintillata*, Black Lory *C. atra* and Purple-bellied Lory *Lorius hypoinochrous devittatus*, already had young. So too did a pair of Mindanao (Mount Apo/Johnstone's) Lorikeets *T. johnstoniae*, which was particularly pleasing. Concerned that all of its pairs of this species were closely related, last year a new unrelated male was acquired and paired with one of the females already at Loro Parque, and it is this pair which has produced young. It is an important step forward in preserving this species in captivity. It is kept now in only four European zoos, with the number

fluctuating between 20-25 birds. It has more-or-less disappeared from private collections. The European Breeding Programme (EEP) for this lorikeet is coordinated by the Loro Parque Fundación (LPF).

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OF SIGNIFICANT CONCERN

Following a meeting hosted by Chester Zoo in 2011 to discuss the management of threatened Asian birds, which highlighted the Javan Green Magpie *Cissa thalassina* as a species of significant concern, Roger Wilkinson the zoo's Head of Field Conservation and Research and Andrew Owen, the zoo's Curator of Birds, travelled to Indonesia to help develop a project to conserve this species. With the support of Chester Zoo, the Javan-based Cikananga Conservation Center is developing a breeding programme for the Javan Green Magpie using birds recovered from the bird trade. The project also hopes to carry out further searches for this species in the wild, which Roger and Andrew failed to find during their short stay.

Roger and Andrew travelled onto Bali to see the work that is being done to conserve the Bali Starling *Leucopsar rothschildi* and discuss how Chester Zoo can help. They visited the Begawan Foundation Bali Starling Release Programme and took part in the project's biannual bird census on Nusa Penida.

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ANIMALS IN THE BLOOD

Animals in the Blood: The Ken Smith Story, a biography of "Gerald Durrell's Right-Hand Man" by Russell Tofts, has just been published by The Bartlett Society, 6 Queen Street, Dawlish, Devon EX7 9HB, UK (website: www.zoohistory.co.uk). Price £16.99, plus £3.99 p&p.

Smith and Durrell met when they were both trainee keepers at Whipsnade Zoo and Smith accompanied Durrell on his second expedition to Cameroon and his subsequent expedition to Guyana, as well as undertaking several of his own expeditions. He later became Superintendent of Paignton Zoo, helped set up Jersey Zoo (now the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust) and had his own zoo at Exmouth in Devon. Frank Woolham remembered working with him at Belle Vue Zoo, Manchester.

For many years, Ken Smith was a member of the Avicultural Society, whose name often cropped up in News & Views and who wrote several articles which appeared in the magazine.

UNDER NEW OWNERSHIP

Umgeni River Bird Park, Durban, South Africa, opened in 1984 by the late Dr Alan Abrey and sold in 1996, prior to his retirement, to Tsogo Sun International, was in 2010, bought by the local municipality, which plans to turn it into one of eThekweni's leading attractions.

A lot of renovations have been made and many new species of birds have been added to the collection. Those visitors can see include South Africa's National Bird the Blue or Stanley Crane *Anthropoides paradisea*, Blue-headed Macaws *Primolius couloni*, Palm Cockatoos *Probosciger aterrimus*, a Nicobar Pigeon *Caloena nicobarica* (apparently the only one in South Africa), Great Hornbills *Buceros bicornis*, Southern Ground Hornbills *Bucorvus leadbeateri* and Pink-backed Pelicans *Pelecanus rufescens*. All of the flamingos in a photo accompanying the story appear to be Greater Flamingos *Phoenicopterus roseus*. Species breeding there are said to include a Barn Owl *Tyto alba*, African Spoonbill *Platalea alba*, Golden Conure *Guaruba guarouba*, Blue-winged Kookaburra *Dacelo leachii* and various lorikeets.

The park has a free-flight bird show, which has grown to be a favourite amongst visitors, and also offers educational programmes.

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WHISTLING LIKE AN OTTER

Simon Bruslund, Curator of Birds at Loro Parque, has observed that the male Edwards's Fig Parrot *Psittaculirostris edwardsii*, whose aviary is just in front of the enclosure housing the Asian or Oriental Small-clawed Otters *Amblonyx cinereus*, mimics the whistles of these small otters.

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RUNNING FOR THE SPOON-BILLED SANDPIPER

Nigel Hewston completed the London Marathon in 4 hours, 19 minutes, 35 seconds, which was slightly slower than he had hoped. At the last count Nigel had raised over £2,000 (approx. US\$3,000), with hundreds more promised. The Avicultural Society donated £200 (approx. US\$300).

The money will go towards an ambitious conservation project to help conserve the dwindling population of the Critically Endangered Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*, of which as few as 200 birds may survive.

An expedition to Chukotka in eastern Siberia by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust (WWT) and its Russian partners succeeded in rearing 13 birds, which were brought to the UK and are now housed in a purpose-built breeding facility at Slimbridge and should be old enough to breed next year.

OBITUARIES

RAYMOND SAWYER THE END OF AN ERA

Raymond Sawyer, President of the Avicultural Society, died on February 21st 2012. He was 87 years old. Raymond joined the Avicultural Society in 1949 and succeeded his late wife Ruth as President in 2007, having previously been a Vice President for several years and a long-serving Council Member.

There must be very few people in the world of aviculture in the past 50-60 years who Raymond did not know. He had been a friend of almost all of the notable aviculturists of the period. Jean Delacour (the doyen of aviculturists) had been a dear friend, so too had Dick de Quincey and Sydney Porter (who in 1946 had been the first aviculturist in the UK to breed the Kea), other friends included Ruth's father Alfred Ezra, John Spedan Lewis, The Duke of Bedford and Herbert Whitley (the founder of Paignton Zoo). Sir David Attenborough, a long-time friend, was among the guests who gathered at Chestnut Lodge to celebrate Raymond's 87th birthday last August, so too were Dr Henry Quinque and his wife, who flew over from France specially to join the celebration.

In the mid-1950s, when I began working in the Bird House at London Zoo, Raymond was a regular visitor and was a leading exhibitor, who took most of the top awards at the leading bird shows. He won the Supreme Award at the National Exhibition of Cage & Aviary Birds four times in the 1950s: in 1952 with a Ruby-Topaz Hummingbird, in 1955 with a King Bird-of-Paradise, in 1958 with an Andean (Scarlet) Cock-of-the-Rock and in 1959 with a Streamer-tailed Hummingbird.

For several years Raymond was responsible for the livestock kept in the parks and open spaces of the Greater London Council, which included the zoos at Crystal Palace and Battersea Park. In Vol.103, No.2, pp.49-66 of the magazine (1997), Raymond wrote about the first twenty-five years at Cobham, during which he succeeded in breeding 16 species for the first time in the UK. These included the Splendid and Emerald Starlings, the Violet Turaco, Masked Crimson Tanager, Blue Whistling Thrush, Black-necked and Black-winged Stilts and Wattled Jacana. The Blue-bellied Roller (1998) and more recently the Long-toed Lapwing, along with some as yet undocumented species, may bring the final total to 20 or more UK first breedings.

Raymond often became tearful when recalling his many friends who are no longer with us, but we also laughed a lot. He recently recalled how in the 1950s he persuaded the actress Jayne Mansfield (the US blonde bombshell

and a big star at the time) to open his local bird show in East London and after the show invited her and her husband back to his home for tea. As they were leaving, Jayne Mansfield lost her footing on the narrow staircase and fell on top of Raymond. Her husband, the strongman Mickey Hargitay (Mr Universe 1955), tried to save her but also lost his footing and he too landed on top of Raymond at the foot of the stairs. Fortunately nobody was hurt and Raymond turned a potentially serious accident into an hilarious story.

Raymond loved to talk about the "good old days" and just a few weeks before he died, I had promised to go up and spend two or three days with him at Chestnut Lodge.

Malcolm Ellis

MEMORIES OF RAYMOND A LUMINARY OF THE BIRD WORLD

I first got to know Raymond in the 1960s when I worked for John Yealland, Curator of Birds at London Zoo. Raymond was already one of the luminaries of the bird world in England and he and fellow aviculturists such as Viscount Chaplin, Newton Steele, Harry Horswell, Fred Johnson and Alfredo Marques exchanged birds and told wonderful stories.

As well as a love of birds, Raymond and I also shared a love of horses. Raymond had been a successful show jumper in his teens and had competed against both Pat and Stirling Moss. When I first visited the home he shared with his father, I was struck by the large aquariums of freshwater and tropical fish and the wonderful aviaries he had set up in the small back garden. Not only was Raymond an expert in the care of rare and beautiful birds, his talent extended to the wonderful way in which he had planted out the aviaries. He always said that his love of birds was sparked by a canary given to his mother, which he took over and cared for when he was just five years of age. His first exotic bird was a hill mynah purchased from Palmers Pet Stores in Camden Town.

Later in life, visits to Palmers (which was just down the road from London Zoo) became a staple of his Saturday outings with his good friend David Attenborough, as they scoured London for unusual birds and tropical fish. His mother died when Raymond was in his late teens and Raymond remained with his father and cared for him until his father's death. It was then that Ruth Ezra invited Raymond to live at Chestnut Lodge and, with Ruth's encouragement, Raymond used his extraordinary talent to transform the grounds into the magical place everyone so adored.

Raymond will be greatly missed by the avicultural world and especially those of us who were lucky enough to be his friends.

Jane Cooper

THE WORLD'S LEADING SOFTBILL SPECIALIST

Raymond was acknowledged as the world's leading exotic softbill specialist. It seems unlikely that any other individual kept more species or had a greater depth of knowledge on the subject. At Chestnut Lodge, with its park-like grounds, he was able to keep a wide range of birds but it was always the softbills which were closest to his heart. A few parrots featured in the collection, including mutation kakarikis and rosellas, as well as a pair of Eclectus and he formerly bred Keas.

Raymond was known primarily as an aviculturist but his true genius lay with plants. He had an unmatched gift for creating extraordinarily beautiful yet natural settings in aviaries and on the patios where his remarkable collection of bonsai, cycads, shrubs and plants formed such a wonderful display that no one who saw it could ever forget. An aviary bigger and more beautifully planted than the average lawn, a tropical house filled with gems such as cotingas and sunbirds among flowering vines and palms, and numerous smaller aviaries, some enclosed to protect the more delicate species, delighted the eye.

The President's Garden Party was always the highlight of the society's social calendar and, like Ruth before him, with great generosity Raymond donated to the society all of the money raised by ticket sales. He regularly opened the garden to local organisations for charity and as the fame of the collection grew, literally thousands of people visited it as part of the National Gardens Scheme.

Raymond was also an aquarist of note, keeping the then difficult Discus Fish back in the 1960s. He never lost his interest in tropical fish. The Koi pond at Chestnut Lodge was always a focal point. Raymond had a deep love of animals, especially dogs and was a successful show jumper in his youth.

Those who knew him well, as I had done since 1962, relished his (often wicked) humour and will miss him sorely. Everyone is saying the same: "It is the end of an era." The days of big collections in park-like settings have now gone, along with a remarkable man who was truly a unique individual.

Rosemary Low

PROF. J. R. HODGES

Recently the weekly publication *Cage & Aviary Birds* (February 15th, p.2, 2012) reported that only 21 Orange-bellied Parrots survive in the wild. Recent research undertaken at Melaleuca in Tasmania, where the birds breed (which Bob and his wife and two friends visited in October 1997), found only eight females among the surviving group of birds. All hope is now pinned on a captive breeding programme.

Knowing Bob's strongly held view that a captive breeding programme involving reputable aviculturists should have been instituted many years ago, I cut out the report and posted it to Bob and was saddened to learn from his daughter Ros, that her father had died peacefully on February 9th 2012. Bob joined the Avicultural Society in 1947. He took a keen interest in all groups of birds but, I believe, specialised in grass parakeets (and possibly Gouldians) and in Vol.81, No.2, pp.61-63 (1975) wrote about his experiences obtaining and breeding the blue mutation of the Splendid Grass Parakeet.

Following the death of Mary Harvey, after a prolonged period of poor health, Bob stepped in and picked up the pieces and, despite the difficulty he had getting sufficient material, edited the magazine from 1991-1993. He was elected a Vice President in 1985, became Chairman of the Council following the death of Harry Horswell in 1990 and was later elected an Hon. Life Member.

Malcolm Ellis

WENDY DUGGAN

We regret to report the death of Wendy Duggan of Putney on February 21st. Wendy was known for her great affection for parrots, especially cockatoos, with whom she shared her home - probably since at least the 1950s. For many years she worked for the BBC in connection with children's programmes. Her Sulphur-crested Cockatoo, named Katoo, became famous for his regular appearances on the children's TV programme *Playschool*. Wendy joined the Avicultural Society in 1961 and was a familiar face at the wine and cheese evenings at the Linnean Society and at other gatherings and was also an active member of the Southern Foreign Bird Club from its inception in 1963. She exhibited cockatoos at the annual shows and won many awards with them. She was also a Fellow of the Zoological Society of London.

Wendy was always delighted to see friends and always interested in their news. She had a fund of stories from the past and was a most entertaining raconteur. Wendy and her husband shared an interest in art and antiques - especially any object connected with birds and other animals. Rumour has it that when the Queen Mother decided she would like a cockatoo, she asked Wendy for one and in exchange Wendy received several bottles of a very expensive brandy!

In recent years Wendy had sadly suffered from very poor health. Condolences are offered to her husband Ron.

Rosemary Low and Rosemary Wiseman

COLLABORATING ON NEW TECHNIQUE

Loro Parque Fundación of Tenerife, Spain and the University of Giessen in Germany are collaborating on the use of a new technique, using sperm collection and artificial insemination (AI), in an attempt to increase the number of Spix's Macaws *Cyanopsitta spixii* being bred.

There are fewer than 80 captive birds in the recovery programme and reproduction within the population is slow. The main objective therefore is to increase the number of young birds being bred. Although successful with humans and with many other mammals and some other types of birds, sperm collection and artificial insemination has had only very limited success with parrots. However, the use of this new technique shows very promising results and, hopefully, will lead to improved breeding success with this incredibly rare macaw.

The initial phase of the project began in 2009/2010 and during that time the technique was used successfully for the first time to collect sperm from birds at the Spix's Macaw Breeding Centre of the Loro Parque Fundación. Successful artificial insemination, however, is yet to take place. Loro Parque Fundación has nine macaws, which are on loan from the Brazilian Government, which gave its permission for the technique to be tested. Trials will also take place on birds at Al Wabra Wildlife Preservation in Qatar.

During the same period, the new technique was used to successfully collect semen and artificially inseminate over 100 species of large parrots in the large and diverse Loro Parque Fundación collection. It is a significant step forward and, this pioneering first phase, will act as an excellent foundation for establishing a method of cryopreservation (frozen storage) and the eventual establishment of a parrot sperm bank.

* * *

AUTUMN SOCIAL MEETING

The Autumn Social Meeting & AGM will be held on Saturday, September 22nd, at Christopher Marler's collection at Weston Underwood, Olney, Buckinghamshire MK46 5JR. Further details will follow later.



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Vielguth, Jurgen et al. 2012. "Breeding The Toco Toucan *Ramphastos Toco* And Black-necked Aracari *Pteroglossus Oracari* At Weltvogelpark Walsrode." *The Avicultural magazine* 118(1), 32–36.

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