

CHESTER ZOO BIRD REVIEW 1994

By Roger Wilkinson, Curator of Birds.

With the advent of Ostrich farming and resultant scarcity in zoos of female Ostriches our male Masai Ostrich *Struthio camelus masaicus* remained unpaired in 1994. We have now been promised a 1994 bred female on breeding loan but it will be several years before we may expect egg-laying. The Emus *Dromaius novaehollandiae* hatched a single chick in March and began laying again in December. Rheas *Rhea americana* were also successful in rearing chicks this year.

Whereas only two Humboldt Penguin *Spheniscus humboldti* chicks hatched in 1993 (neither of which survived) 10 were hatched between March and July. Again we experienced problems with these chicks but by the year-end three fine youngsters had been reared. Five more chicks hatched in December and we hope this may be a turning point, returning us to those heady years of 1986-1988 when 46 chicks were reared over a three year period. With managed breeding programmes, any one zoo producing such high numbers is now less important and indeed may be contrary to the aims of the programme. Over the whole of Europe the co-ordinated Humboldt Penguin population continues to increase even though individual colonies have their ups and downs. Six unrelated young Humboldts were received on loan at Chester from Penscynor and a further six purchased from Birdworld.

Other new arrivals include two White Pelicans *Pelecanus onocratulus* bred at Tierpark Berlin. It is over 15 years since Chester Zoo last held pelicans so these new additions have caused some excitement here. Also new to the collection are four Scarlet Ibis *Eudocimus ruber* received from Zurich Zoo. Six Waldrapp Ibis *Geronticus eremita* were successfully parent-reared by two pairs in the original colony. Those Waldrapps transferred to the 'Europe on the Edge' exhibit showed little interest in breeding in 1994. At the year end a group of 1993 bred birds were transferred to the new exhibit and with this increase in numbers it is hoped the resident Waldrapps may be stimulated to breed this year.

Six Chilean Flamingos *Phoenicopterus chilensis* were reared in 1994. The increase in the numbers of Chilean Flamingos reared this year resulted from intensive egg management. Each egg was removed and replaced by a wooden dummy. If fertile the egg was

returned a few days prior to pipping and left to hatch under the parents. This allowed a greater number of eggs to hatch and more chicks to be reared. Observations indicated that there was much aggression between flamingos in the closely adjacent nests with eggs being deliberately knocked off nests. Indeed the only way to ensure the birds remained sitting on nests once their own egg had been removed was to use a spiked dummy egg that could be firmly secured into the nest. Unsecured dummies were knocked off and the nests taken over by other pairs. The first egg returned to a Chilean nest had just externally pipped. This proved to be a mistake for it was immediately knocked off the nest by a non-parental female. On being returned to the nest again that same female rushed to the nest before the parents could return and deliberately smashed the egg with her bill. She had been looking for a preferred central nest site herself as indicated by her laying an egg the next morning. Subsequently eggs were returned before external pipping and all six hatched and were reared.

Egg management was practiced only for the Chilean Flamingos where a problem had been indicated after only a single youngster was reared in 1993. The Caribbean Flamingos *P. ruber ruber* also reared six chicks but without our intervention.

Four Black-necked Swans, *Cygnus melanocoryphus*, five Red-breasted Geese *Branta ruficollis* and four Hawaiian Geese *B. sandvicensis* were reared - the latter by their parents. Other waterfowl reared include Mandarin Ducks *Aix galericulata*, Carolina Wood Ducks *A. sponsa*, Laysan Teal *Anas laysanensis*, Marbled Teal *Marmaronetta angustirostris*, White-winged Wood Ducks *Cairina scutulata*, Rosy-billed Pochard *Netta rufina*, Hooded Mergansers *Mergus cucullatus* and Smew *M. albellus*. Three Smew were hatched and reared under their mother, the ducklings being transferred with their mother to a shed once hatched. Cuban Whistling Ducks *Dendrocygna arborea*, recently received on loan from the Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, laid during the year but none were hatched. White-headed Ducks *Oxyura leucocephala* and Baikal Teal *Anas formosa* were hatched but neither were reared to independence.

Five Bare-faced Curassows *Crax fasciolata* were reared as were 10 Temminck's Tragopans *Tragopan temmincki* and two Satyr Tragopans *T. satyra*. Both the Temminck's and Satyrs were allowed to sit later clutches and both proved to be excellent parents. We were especially pleased to receive a pair of Blyth's Tragopans *T. blythii* on loan from the World Pheasant Association. These were

bred by Glen Howe in Canada and quarantined on our behalf by Banham Zoo. Other galliforms bred in 1994 were 15 Edwards' Pheasants *Lophura edwardsi* 15 Himalayan Monals *Lophura impeyanus*, Golden Pheasants *Chrysolophus pictus*, Palawan Peacock-Pheasant *Polyplectron emphanum*, Common Peafowl *Pavo cristatus* and Californian Quail *Lophortyx californica*.

Our Red-crowned Cranes *Grus japonensis* reared two youngsters. This was the first time they had hatched two chicks and the siblings at first fought viciously causing us much anxiety. However after several weeks this aggression faded and both chicks were reared together. For the first time we attempted artificial insemination on our Wattled Cranes *Buggeranus caruncu/atus* and Demoiselle Cranes *Anthropoides virgo*. Debbie Bourne was kind enough to demonstrate this for our Wattled Cranes and the procedure was repeated by our staff on the Demoiselles. Sadly the exercise was unsuccessful in that the Wattled Crane eggs proved infertile and the Demoiselles failed to recycle. Blue Cranes *A. paradisea* are new to the collection having been received on loan from Harewood Bird Gardens and from Whipsnade Zoo.

Gough Island Moorhens *Gallinula comeri*, after a number of years with unsuccessful breeding attempts, succeeded in rearing a chick from their first brood this year but were unsuccessful in rearing two chicks hatched from a later brood. Our two male Sun Bitterns *Eurypyga helias* have been without a mate for over ten years. As such we were extremely pleased to receive a female on loan from Birdland, Bourton-on-the-Water. She also is quite an elderly bird so it will be interesting to see whether we can achieve a pairing.

A group of Avocets *Recurvirostra avosetta* now grace the 'Europe on the Edge' aviary along with Stone Curlews *Burhinus oedicephalus*. Also new to this enclosure are four wild type Rock Doves *Columba livia* donated by Zurich Zoo. Within Great Britain there are now few pure colonies of Rock Doves, most having been infiltrated either by feral pigeons or stray racing pigeons.

Nicobar Pigeons were received only recently into the collection and are housed as a group in the first block of new spacious aviaries in the Tropical House: one pair nested and successfully reared a chick. A pair of Rothschild's Mynahs *Leucopsar rothschildi*, sharing the same enclosure had five successive breeding attempts from which a total of 16 chicks were hatched. Eight of these were reared by a combination of parent and hand-rearing. Three other pairs of Rothschild's Mynahs held elsewhere in the collection

failed to hatch a single chick between them. Both pairs of Superb Fruit Doves *Ptilinopus superba* reared chicks but the three reared to maturity all moulted out as males. Blue Crowned Pigeons *Goura cristata* after being moved down into one of the new Tropical House aviaries laid for the first time since they were received in the collection. Pink Pigeons *Nesoenas mayeri* released into the free-flight of the Tropical House failed to nest but have become aggressive towards other pigeons in the same area although not to other birds. If the Pink Pigeons would breed in that area then as an endangered species such disturbance would be acceptable. Should no breeding attempts ensue then we may have to re-think this option and house them elsewhere.

Softbills successfully reared in 1994 include Trumpeter Hornbills *Bycanistes buccinator*, African Grey Hornbills *Tockus nasutus epirhinus*, Schalow's Touracos *Tauraco schalowi*, Kookaburras *Dacelo novaeguineae*, Red-billed Blue Pies *Urocissa erythrorhyncha*, Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyana*, Pekin Robins *Leiothrix lutea*, Red-tailed Laughing Thrush *Garrulax milnei*, Superb Spreeo Starling *Spreo superbus* and Asian Red-eyed Starlings *Aplonis panayensis*.

Tawny Frogmouths *Podargus strigoides* were bred for the first time at Chester, one chick being hand-reared from an incubator hatched egg.

The Wrinkled Hornbills *Aceros corrugatus* made no breeding attempt when in the Bird House during the summer and were moved in the autumn to their new quarters in the Tropical House. Our original pair of Channel-billed Toucans *Ramphastos vitellinus*, despite the female now looking her age, again fledged two chicks. These youngsters looked excellent strong birds so I was the more surprised on returning from a zoo visit to California to discover that both youngsters and the breeding male had died during my absence. That sadly may have signalled the end to eight years successful breeding of Channel-billed Toucans. Our second pair also succumbed during the final month of the year. Post mortems have suggested differing causes for each death but I cannot help but feel there must have been some unidentified common condition that led to these five deaths in such a short space of time.

Success is not easily won with birds and where no co-ordinated breeding programmes exist we are now forced to question the long-term value of aviculture. Fortunately, many such programmes exist for many parrots allowing the possibility of recovery from the intermittent setbacks in individual collections.

Our parrot breeding results exceeded our expectations this year but we were brought back to earth at the end of the year with the deaths of several important birds. Both pairs of Blue and Gold Macaws *Ara ararauna* fledged two youngsters. However one of these pairs have developed a habit of plucking their chicks in the nest. Surprisingly this is the pair held in the largest enclosure whilst the pair maintained in the smaller parrot house aviary have never displayed this vice. The Red-fronted Macaws *A. rubrogenys* hatched and reared five chicks in one brood. Five Blue-eyed Cockatoos *Cacatua ophthalmica* were hand-reared from incubator hatched eggs. Again the main breeding pair of Blue-eyed Cockatoos were allowed to sit a clutch of their own eggs but this was without success. Green-cheeked Amazons *Amazona viridigenalis* hatched and reared four chicks and the Lilacine Amazons *A. autumnalis lilacina* reared two chicks. Again this was soured by the loss of the breeding female later in the year. Our Cuban Amazons *A. leucocephala* were obtained as confiscated birds from Customs and Excise. These form part of a breeding programme in U.K zoos managed from Chester. We were extremely pleased when the Cubans nested but perhaps due to her partner's inattentiveness, the female abandoned her three chicks after two weeks necessitating them to be taken for hand-rearing. All three were successfully reared completing our hat-trick of Amazon breeding in 1994. Yellow-backed Chattering Lories *Lorius garrullus flavopalliatus* and Stella's Lorikeets *Charmosyna papou goliathina* were successfully reared. Only one Musschenbroek's Lorikeet *Neopsittacus musschenbroeki* fledged but unfortunately did not survive to the year end.

Other parrots bred included two Derbyan Parrakeets *Psittacula derbyana*, four Splendid Parrakeets *Neophema splendida*, four Slender-billed Conures *Enicognathus leptorhynchus*, four Greater Vasa Parrots *Coracopsis vasa* and two Lesser Vasa Parrots *C. nigra*.

This year's greatest success was in the hatching of two Thick-billed Parrots *Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha* both of which were parent-reared. Golden Conures *Guaruba guarouba* after laying for the first time in 1993 went one stage further by hatching but failing to rear a chick in 1994.

New arrivals included Black-winged Lories *Eos cynaogenia* and Blue-streaked Lories *E. reticulata* on loan from Penscynor and amongst other birds a pair of exquisite Red-flanked Lorikeets *Charmosyna pulchella* generously donated by Frank Woolham.

The Snowy Owls *Nyctea scandiaca* were unsuccessful in rearing their chicks but three White-faced Scops Owls *Otus leucotis* and four Barn Owls *Tyto alba* were reared. We work in close conjunction with the Keele University Barn Owl Release Scheme run by Dr Carole Hackney and as in previous years the young Barn Owls were donated to the release scheme. A total of 111 Barn Owls bred at Chester Zoo have now been released through this and other approved schemes in Cheshire, the Wirral and more recently Staffordshire. With the increasing pressures on wild bird populations zoos like Chester are looking at how they can become further involved in zoo breeding programmes that are linked to conservation in the wild.

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BOOK REVIEWS

A recent publication from the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, *Wetland, Industry and Wildlife* by Antony Merritt is a valuable book, not only for the growing number of wildlife officers and ecologists now working in UK industry, but for anyone with land which includes an area of one of the world's most threatened habitats.

It is above all a practical guide to the creation, restoration and maintenance of wetlands so that they are of real value to wildlife. The book has 182 pages and although colour photographs are used only on the front and back covers, it is generously illustrated throughout with photographs and plans.

The manual is set out in three parts which describe and discuss a range of topics related to wetlands, industry and wildlife. Part I considers the role and involvement of industry in the creation and management of wetlands. Part II provides an overview of wetland ecology, design, creation and management, drawn from recent literature and experience. Part III looks at the most significant types of industrial wetlands found in the UK, featuring selected case studies where appropriate, and considers their current and potential value to wildlife.

There are also 11 useful appendices dealing with associated subjects including trees and shrubs; aquatic plants; birds of fresh-water and estuarine habitat; etc.

Wetlands, Industry and Wildlife by Antony Merritt, costs £14.95, inclusive of postage and packing. Published by the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, Slimbridge, Gloucester, GL2 7BT (tel: 01453 890333) from whom it is available.

F.W.

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Without actually seeing and handling it, and leafing through its 638 (310 x 240 mm) pages, it would have been impossible to believe that Volume 2 of the *HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD* could be better than its predecessor. For how do you improve on perfection? Only, one assumes, with the help of Divine Intervention. So, practically every other superlative that might be lavished on a work of this kind having been fully utilised, let me be the first to congratulate editors, Josep del Hoyo, Andrew Elliott and Jordi Sargatal on the quality of their connections!

Volume 2 covers New World Vultures to Guinea fowl - in

summary, New World Vultures; Osprey; Kites, Hawks, Harriers, Eagles and Old World Vultures; Secretarybird; Caracaras and Falcons; Megapodes; Chachalacas, Guans and Curassows; Turkeys; Grouse; New World Quails; Partridges, Old World Quails, Francolins and Pheasants; Guineafowl.

There is much in this particular volume to interest aviculturists for it encompasses all presently known species (and significant subspecies) of diurnal Raptors and most of the Galliformes. So far as the latter are concerned, if you want to know more about the Hoatzin you will have to wait for Volume 3 (covering Hoatzin to Auks) which is scheduled for publication in mid-1996.

The second volume, as one would anticipate, closely follows the style of Volume 1 - descriptions of each family and species' accounts. The former are extremely comprehensive while the latter tend to be informative but concise. No matter where you look in these superlative early volumes you are unlikely to find yourself, as is the case with most other works other than monographs, short of information.

The two bird-keepers among our four sons now look forward eagerly to the appearance of a new volume of the HBW. For they know they will be the recipients of 'fallout' from my modest library of previously published works, some of them of recent origin, which are now being rendered almost obsolete by 'the' Handbook.

Illustrative content is brilliant - the publishers say they are '... probably the most original element of the work'. I would disagree - only to suggest they are 'one' of the most original elements.

Plates, by world famous artists, will depict for the first time *all* of the world's known bird species. Several figures have been painted for some species, illustrating sexual dimorphism, plus all relatively common morphs in polymorphic species, together with distinctive subspecies.

Photographs are again outstanding. For me one of the most pleasant surprises was to see, on page 435, a photograph of the Udzungwa Forest-partridge *Xenoperdix udzungwensis*. Discovered only in 1991, it was first believed to be a Francolin until, when scientifically described in early 1994, it was placed in a monotypic genus and is believed to be most closely related to Asia's Arborophila Hill-Partridges.

Now, knowing a little - just a little - about the publishing world, I can assure members that with a massive book of this kind, published in late 1994 and able to refer to material revealed only

a few months earlier - well, you really can't be more up-to-date than that.

There are many other photographs to add to the beautiful and valuable illustrative quality of the plates. I set out to draw attention to those that took my eye, but realised that, with at least 80%, for one reason or another, utterly eye-catching, space would not allow such an indulgence.

Volume 2 of the *HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD* costs a cool £98.00 (plus £5.00 postage and packing).

Now why should you spend so much money on a bird book? I can tell you quickly and easily. Because until someone else with undreamed of connections comes along with a better idea, this looks likely to remain the definitive work for many years to come. And I suspect that cared-for volumes will appreciate rapidly in value.

The *HANDBOOK OF THE BIRDS OF THE WORLD* can be purchased in specialist bookshops or directly from the publishers - LYNX EDICIONS, Passeig de Gracia, 12, 08007 BARCELONA, Tel: 34-3 301 07 07. Fax: 34-3 302 14 75

F.W.

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With the publication last year of the long awaited Volumes VIII and IX, of *The Birds of the Western Palearctic*, this excellent and informative nine-volume set is now complete. A definitive work, it contains descriptions of more than 770 species which occur in the Western Palearctic and will be of value to aviculturists as well as professional and amateur ornithologists.

Contents of the nine volumes are (I) Ostrich to Ducks, (II) Hawks to Bustards, (III) Waders to Gulls, (IV) Terns to Woodpeckers, (V) Tyrant Flycatchers to Thrushes, (VI) Warblers, (VII) Flycatchers to Shrikes, (VIII) Crows to Finches, (IX) Buntings and New World Warblers. They account for 7,000 pages of reference and more 440 specially commissioned colour plates by leading artists including Norman Arlott, Trevor Boyer, C. E. Talbot-Kelly, Ian Lewington and Hilary Burn.

Sections are included on field characters, habitat, distribution, mortality, population, movements, food, social patterns and behaviour, breeding, voice, plumage, moult, measurements, weights, structure and geographical variation.

Volume VIII will be of considerable interest to many

aviculturists containing as it does detailed information about many popular European species with illustrations depicting the various races of Hawfinches, Bullfinches, Goldfinches, etc.

In its field this set is clearly and obviously an excellent successor to Witherby's classic *Handbook*. Chief Editor for the series was the late Stanley Cramp, with C. M. Perrins editing the final three volumes.

The Birds of the Western Palearctic is published by Oxford University Press, Walton Street, Oxford, OX2 6DP. Volume VIII costs £95.00, Volume IX costs £85.00 (both plus postage and packing). Also available from specialist booksellers.

F.W.

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FREDDIE COOKE

Frederick Charles Cooke, known to his many friends as 'Fred' or 'Freddie', died earlier this year following a long illness. He is survived by two sons from his first marriage, by his widow, Dulcie, her son and his children.

Freddie brought commitment, skill and enthusiasm to everything he did. At Worcester School he played rugby, ran for the school and sang in the choir of Worcester Cathedral.

Prior to the outbreak of World War II he was already a pilot in the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. During the war he was in charge of a substantial number of engineers who serviced aircraft on Bomber Command's operational squadrons and was thus, to some degree, responsible for the lives of aircrew.

After the war he worked for many years for a major aircraft company, becoming a Director and travelling widely, mainly to America, Africa and Germany. He retired twice, but each time missed the pace of the business life to which he had become accustomed.

Following the death of his first wife, and with his sons already married, his marriage to Dulcie brought him into contact with a whole new world - aviculture. With customary enthusiasm, he equipped himself properly, immersing himself in activities ranging from the study of genetics to designing and constructing superb aviaries. He also lectured and chaired seminars, and with Dulcie wrote many articles and books on subjects connected with aviculture.

Dulcie, his two sons, their relatives and large circle of friends knew well the intense warmth of his personality, and in Dulcie's case the great love they shared during 21 years of marriage.

Freddie was also a quite splendid Grandfather, affectionately enthusiastic with even the youngest Grandchild. For the older ones - and at the age of 73 - he was the author of a simple manual dealing with computer skills.

His ability to make the best possible use of time was an inspiration to all who knew him, as was his great courage during a long illness.

He numbered many members of the Avicultural Society among his friends and will be greatly missed by all of them.

F.W.

MACAWS FLOCK TO SOTHEBY'S

Sotheby's are holding an exhibition, from Monday 17th to Friday 28th July (Monday to Friday, 9.00 am to 4.30 pm), to celebrate completion of what is described as '... one of the most ambitious publishing projects of the century'. Macaws are the subject of an exceptional limited edition of hand-coloured etchings by acclaimed artist, Elizabeth Butterworth. The edition of 50, entitled 'Macaws', consists of 12 life-size etchings. The project, which has taken 12 years, is the brainchild of specialist publisher and ornithologist, Rodolphe d'Erlanger.

The exhibition will include the artist's original sketches and watercolours alongside the etchings, and will be held at 34/35, New Bond Street, London, W1. Profits from the project will be donated to the Friends of the Peruvian Rainforest, who aim to secure one million acres of Peruvian rainforest in order to maintain the habitat of macaws and other wildlife in perpetuity.

'Macaws' was printed on handrolling etching presses - replicas of those used in the 18th and 19th centuries - but the sheer size of each image presented d'Erlanger's printers with a considerable challenge. No-one has ever attempted to overprint up to six plates with hair-line registration. For the 12 illustrations, 61 imperial copper plates were made, more than 350 specially mixed colours were used and, in one instance, 17 colours were inked onto a single plate.

Born in Lancashire and trained at the Rochdale School of Art, Elizabeth Butterworth completed her studies at the Royal College of Art, London. Since the mid-1970s she has had one-woman exhibitions in major world centres as well as taking part in group shows in the UK, USA and Japan. Her works are in many public collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, the National Library of Australia, Canberra, and the Museo de Arte Contemporaneo de Caracas, Venezuela. Previous publications include *Parrots and Cockatoos* (1978, Fischer Fine Art, London) and *Parrots, Macaws, Cockatoos: the art of Elizabeth Butterworth* (1989, Abrams, New York).

Rodolphe d'Erlanger, a passionate ornithologist, commissioned Elizabeth Butterworth to paint a portrait of one of his parrots in 1977, and so began a creative partnership resulting in the award-winning monograph *Amazon Parrots* which was published by



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