

day symposium to be held on the 19th May 1998, at Bristol Zoo. It is planned to examine the problems, priorities and practical aspects of improving the husbandry and breeding of passerines in captivity, and will also discuss their conservation. The following day, 20th May, will be devoted to pigeons and doves, and will be organised by Duncan Bolton.

Further information about both days can be obtained from:-

Duncan Bolton,
Bristol Zoological Gardens,
Clifton
Bristol BS8 3HA.

THE SOCIETY'S VISIT TO BIRDLAND

by Stewart Pyper

Following the Council Meeting of 12th April 1997 (reported on next page) and lunch in a local pub, almost 50 members and their guests visited Birdland. The original Birdland was created by the late Len Hill, who was a staunch supporter of the Avicultural Society. After his death it closed and reopened later at a new seven acres (approx. three hectares) site beside the River Windrush in Bourton-on-the-Water. It is being built up gradually and it looked as so some of the original aviaries have been re-erected. The new owner is Eddie Twigg, Veronica Wilson is the Manager and David Woodcock the Curator.

It was a warm, sunny, spring day. As in most collections nowadays there was a large selection of parrots, which included Yellow-streaked Lorries, Hawk-headed Parrots and Queen of Bavaria Conures, Rothschild's Grackles (Bali Starlings), Red-billed Blue Magpies, Spreo Starlings and Violaceous Touracos were admired, as were Kookaburras and White-crested Laughing Thrushes. As a result of the visit, Mike Curzon has loaned Rode's Blue-crowned Motmot to Birdland to make up a potential breeding pair.

In a glass covered aviary, with dense vegetation, were single examples of the Burmese Shrike, Lilac-breasted Roller, San Blas Jay, Imperial Pigeon and Kookaburra, each in need of a mate. Rheas, flamingos and Black Swans were admired, as were the large group of penguins, which included several King Penguins.

The tropical house had a breeding colony of Gouldian Finches in an aviary by themselves. Other inhabitants of the tropical house included two Emerald Starlings, a Red-tailed Laughing Thrush and a Red-billed Hornbill. Other hornbills on view in outside aviaries included the Trumpeter and Black species. Grey Peacock Pheasants always attract attention due to their wonderful plumage and we also admired the Lemon-breasted Pigeons.

COUNCIL MEETING

A Council Meeting was held on Saturday, 12th April 1997 at Bourton-on-the-Water, Gloucestershire.

The following members were present: Miss R. Ezra (President), K. W. Dolton, Prof. J. R. Hodges, C. J. S. Marler and R. C. J. Sawyer (Vice Presidents), K. J. Lawrence (Chairman), M. Curzon, M. Ellis (Hon. Editor), R. Grantham, R. E. Oxley, S. Pyper, P. J. Schofield, S. Tonge, J. T. Trollope and Ms.R. Wiseman.

Stewart Pyper, the Membership Secretary, was pleased to report that the recruitment drive has resulted in an increase in membership. The Editor gave a cautiously optimistic report on his progress in planning the forthcoming issues of the magazine, but was at pains to stress that progress is very much reliant on members providing a steady flow of material suitable for publication in the magazine. The Editor was granted permission (subject to cost) to reproduce three colour plates to illustrate the article about the White-fronted Bee-eater in the next magazine.

It was unanimously agreed by the Council, that the President, Miss Ruth Ezra should write and thank Dr Quinque for his most generous donation to the Society's funds.

It was decided that the President's Garden Party would be held on Sunday 22nd June, and that the Chairman would arrange the Autumn Social Meeting.

COUNCIL MEETING

A Council Meeting was held on Sunday, 14th September 1997 at Bristol Zoological Gardens.

The following members were present: Miss R. Ezra (President), K. W. Dolton and R. C. J. Sawyer (Vice Presidents), K. J. Lawrence (Chairman), M. Ellis (Hon. Editor), R. Grantham, N. Hewston, R. E. Oxley, S. Pyper, P. J. Schofield, G.R. Greed (Hon. Secretary/Treasurer).

The accounts for 1996 showed a small surplus, and it was agreed to have colour plates in all four 1997 issues of the magazine. There were no breeding awards to consider.

It was decided that the D.H.S. Risdon Award for the best article in the magazine during 1996 should go to Anthony J. Mobbs for his article about keeping and breeding Gouldian Finches (*Avicultural Magazine*, 102, 3:99-102). The Council discussed various articles and felt the Anthony Mobbs' article contained a great deal of practical, concise information which formed a sound basis for a person starting to keep Gouldian Finches.

The 1998 Social Meetings were discussed and the meeting concluded with the Hon. Secretary/Treasurer inviting the Society to a special function to be held at Bristol Zoo in June or July 1999.

THE PRESIDENT'S GARDEN PARTY 1997

by Stewart Pyper

The President's Garden Party was held on Sunday 22nd June, when 102 members and their guests journeyed to Cobham, Surrey, to view the wonderful collection of birds kept by our President, Miss Ruth Ezra, and Vice President, Raymond Sawyer. This private collection must rank as one of the finest in the world. Whereas in May it had been feared that we were heading for another summer drought, the garden looked very fresh due to the recent rain. During our visit there were several showers, but these lasted for only a few minutes.

Demoiselle and Crowned Cranes roamed free in the gardens, along with 'Emma' the tame female Stanley Crane. In the aviaries in the front of the house we saw Peruvian Thicknees, Spotted Dikkops, Pink-crested Touracos, Emerald Doves, Island Thrushes and a female grosbeak. The paddock aviaries housed Kookaburras, a Blue Whistling Thrush (at present the two whistling thrushes cannot be paired-up because they fight), Satyr Tragopans, Keas and an egret. Raymond has two baby Giant Tortoises, which is believed to be a European first breeding, and it was interesting to see several of the Giant Tortoises walking around the enclosure.

The 'Jewel Cage' housed Gouldians and Painted Finches. In the lakeside aviary we saw Giant Spotted Laughing Thrushes, Black-necked Stilts and Scarlet Ibis, including a youngster bred last year which is still colouring-up. Black phase Stella's Lories were feeding young. On the lake were flamingos and a selection of waterfowl.

Most of the aviaries are at the rear of the house. All have heated accommodation and are tastefully planted, making them both an aviculturist's and an horticulturist's dream. Blue-faced Honeyeaters had a youngster hand-reared by Sheila Becker, which at the time of our visit was six weeks old, and the Masked Plovers were sitting again. We saw Choughs, Azure-winged Magpies, a Magpie Tanager, Red-winged Laughing Thrushes and Australian King Parrakeets. The five Carmine Bee-eaters are now well established and some tunnels have been constructed in the hope of encouraging them to nest, but so far these have been ignored.

The tropical house had a dazzling array of inmates. Among the birds I saw were six Long-tailed Broadbills, a male Roulroul Partridge, Hooded Pittas, Black-chinned Yuhinas, various zosterops, Golden Bush Chat, Violet-eared and Amazilia Hummingbirds, Splendid Sunbirds which were nesting, and Blue-headed Tanagers. It also houses four Lesser Green Broadbills, Pompadour Cotinga and Strickland's Shama.

The six small indoor heated aviaries contained some more real gems, among them another pair of Splendid Sunbirds, this pair with a youngster

approx. four days old. There were numerous Red-headed Tits, the white race of the Long-tailed Tit, Bearded Reedlings, a Golden-headed Quetzal, various flowerpeckers, dacnis, Purple and Yellow-winged Sugarbirds, Greater and Rufous-bellied Niltavas, Paradise and Turquoise Tanagers, another Hooded Pitta, Fairy Pitta and several young Roulroul Partridges. There were also Brown Twinspots, Crimson Seedcrackers, Western Bluebills and a pair of Rhodospingus Finches, as well as Golden Bush Robin, Blue-winged Fruitsuckers, Scarlet-chested Sunbird and White-fronted Bee-eater. A pair of Red-billed Oxpeckers in rough condition when they were purchased only a short time before had improved so much that they had built a nest and hopes were high that they would reproduce. This aviary has trellis work attached to the wall at the rear so that these birds can cling onto it.

Two birds deserve a fuller description. The first of these being a Black and Red Broadbill from south-east Asia. This species has a blue and yellow bill and its plumage appeared to be more black than red, with a white area on each wing. The broadbill stood out because it was new and most of us had not seen this species before, it having appeared on dealers' lists only in the past ten months or so. Like most broadbills it was not very active and cannot be described as striking in appearance.

The second species is the Orange-breasted Bush Shrike, also known as the Sulphur-breasted Bush Shrike, a very beautiful African species which most visitors would not have seen before. The forehead is greenish yellow, the crown and nape is bluish grey and the back and wings are olive to greenish yellow, while the throat is bright yellow and the breast a rich orange. It measures 19cm (7½in) and is about two-thirds the size of the somewhat similar coloured Grey-headed Bush Shrike. There was a pair, with the female being not quite as bright as the male. There is a good illustration of this shrike in Mackworth-Praed and Grant and a full-page illustration of it in *Shrikes of Southern Africa* by Harris and Arnott.

We saw Bartlett's Bleeding Heart Doves sitting and Green Wood Hoopoes were also incubating eggs. New arrivals at Cobham included a pair of Keel-billed Toucans, and there are now two pairs of Blue-bellied Rollers. It was a delight to watch a pair of red Stella's Lories playing at the water's edge. We also saw Emerald, Royal or Golden-breasted, Amethyst or Violet-backed and Splendid Starlings, also Superb Spreos which have bred again this year, various touracos and the old Toco Toucan. At the time of our visit, Sheila Becker was hand-rearing two Eclectus Parrots only a few days old. Due to the weather, a lovely tea was enjoyed by all, in various parts of the house, where members and their guests were able to enjoy each other's company and discuss various matters - not all of them avicultural. The Society is most grateful to Ruth and Raymond for their kind generosity in donating all the monies from the ticket sales, amounting to over £750, to the Society's funds.

BOOK REVIEW

THE BIRDS OF AFRICA

When I unpacked the review copy of *The Birds of Africa*, Volume V, and saw that this enormous volume (which has 669 pages and weighs almost 8lbs (just over 3kg)) is devoted almost entirely to warblers and flycatchers, my first reaction was one of disappointment. I would have much preferred to have been given the opportunity to review the earlier volume or volumes covering the likes of the kingfishers, bee-eaters, rollers, hornbills, touracos and parrots. It took me a while to appreciate that I now have in a single volume all the warblers and flycatchers which occur in Africa, including the European and other migrants. Most are either 'little brown jobs' or 'little grey jobs' which can be devilishly difficult to distinguish from one another, so having what looks to be all of the species and many of the races and plumages illustrated, and so much information about them in one volume, is obviously a great advantage.

Because most of them lack bright colours, together with the fact that many are highly insectivorous, means that on the infrequent occasions that they become available, their appeal to aviculturists is limited mainly to a few softbill specialists. One species, the Southern Tit Warbler, called in this volume the Chestnut-vented Warbler, was bred recently in the UK by Raymond Sawyer, who you will recall described the breeding in the previous issue of the magazine. So far as I am aware the only other species which has been bred here is the Silverbird (a flycatcher). It was bred here in Cornwall by the late Mrs. Scamell, who imported her birds from Kenya. Re-reading Mrs Scamell's account of the breeding (*Avicultural Magazine*, 79, 6:183-189), brought back wonderful memories of being with Tim and Jane Barnley in Kenya and setting off on a Sunday morning, armed with samosas and Marmite sandwiches and accompanied by their 'bird boys' for Kongelai down in the 'hot country' to catch the Silverbirds, including the pair and their youngster which went to Mrs. Scamell. The Silverbird proved popular because of its attractive coloration and the fact that it is not too difficult to keep. Although, most softbill enthusiasts aspire to trying their hand at keeping paradise flycatchers and wattle-eyes, they are so highly insectivorous that it is questionable whether we should even attempt to keep them. According to this volume, the wattle-eyes and batis or batises are not flycatchers, but flycatcher-like or shrike-like birds, with no general agreement as to precisely where they belong in the overall classification of birds - Sibley and Monroe, apparently on the basis of DNA studies, place them in the family Corvidae!

Volume V opens with the thrushes (including the rock thrushes and ground thrushes, but not the robin chats and other closely allied species) and I have found it interesting to be able to compare various races of the Olive and African Thrushes alongside the Kurrichane Thrush on one plate. I was surprised to find illustrations of the Fieldfare and Redwing in a book about African birds, but then *The Birds of Africa* covers the entire continent including North Africa, where both are winter visitors.

The last bird in Volume V is one which looks and sounds to be a most fascinating species, one I had not been aware of prior to reviewing this volume. It is called the White-tailed Shrike *Lanioturdus torquatus* and is described as 'A semi-terrestrial insectivore, chat-like on the ground but with strong plumage and behavioural resemblance to Batis. Thought to be a malaconotine shrike by Harris and Arnott (1988).' Its eggs resemble those of helmet-shrikes.

The Birds of Africa is published by Academic Press. The present volume (ISBN 0-12-137305-3) is edited by Emil K. Urban, C. Hilary Fry and Stuart Keith, the 32 colour plates (illustrating 676 birds of 312 species) are by Martin Woodcock, the line drawings within the text (illustrating mostly nests) are by Ian Willis, the acoustic references are by Claude Chappuis and the bibliography and indexes by Lois L. Urban. It is priced at £99.00 and is available from the usual booksellers or direct from Academic Press Marketing Department, 24-28 Oval Road, London NW1 7DX. Tel:0181 300 3322/Fax:0171 267 0362/E-mail:wildlife@apuk.co.uk. In the USA, Academic Press is at:-525 B Street, Suite 1900, San Diego, California 92101-4495. Internet:<http://www.apnetcom>.

Malcolm Ellis

NEWS & VIEWS

NEW APPOINTMENT

Christopher West, a Veterinary Surgeon, has been appointed to the new post of Chief Curator at Chester Zoo.

* * *

EGYPTIAN VULTURE FORUM

The Vulture Study Group, based in South Africa, is establishing an international forum for conservation groups which run Egyptian Vulture *Neophron percnopterus* breeding programmes. As well as a project in Italy, there are also breeding programmes in Israel, Spain and Bulgaria. The purpose of the forum will be to provide an exchange of ideas, information, advice and assistance. Working together and sharing knowledge will, it is hoped, contribute greatly to the success of all the programmes. Those interested in participating in the forum should contact Dr Gerhard Verdoorn on his E-mail address :-nesher@global.co.za.

* * *

UK RUBYTHROAT

Thousands of twitchers flocked to a field near Weymouth, Dorset, to see a male Siberian Rubythroat *Erithacus calliope*. The twitchers blocked the lanes for more than a mile around the site and so great were their numbers that they are thought to have frightened the bird away. It is the first time a male has been seen in Britain. A female was seen on the Scottish coast in 1975.

* * *

UNIVERSITIES FEDERATION AWARD

The 1997 UFAW Zoo Animal Welfare Award presented for a new or modified zoo exhibit which is judged to provide improved conditions for the welfare of captive animals and helps visitors to appreciate their physical and behavioural needs, has been presented to Marwell Zoological Park for its new Penguin World exhibit. The park's new home for its Jackass and Macaroni Penguins *Spheniscus demersus* and *Eudyptes chrysolophus* consists of a large, contoured and landscaped area and an hourglass-shaped pool. It is large enough to allow the penguins to 'porpoise' and is deep and has submerged rocks. A biological filtration system cleans and recirculates the water into the pool across a pebble beach and via water jets. The land area is extensive and has a range of different substrates on different levels, secluded areas and nest tunnels. The public can observe the penguins from a number of vantage points, including from an elevated viewing platform and through viewing windows.

CHESTNUT LODGE BREEDINGS

Raymond Sawyer reports that since the Society's visit to Chestnut Lodge in June, Avocets, Black-necked Stilts, Satyr Tragopans, Pink-crested Touracos, Bartlett's Bleeding Heart Doves, Black-naped and Beautiful Fruit Doves, Stella's Lories, Black-cheeked Woodpeckers, Green Wood Hoopoes and Blue-headed Tanagers have bred.

* * *

PARTRIDGE REDISCOVERED

A combined team from the Birdlife Vietnam Programme, Amsterdam University and the National Museum of Natural History (Leiden), has confirmed the presence of the Orange-breasted Partridge *Arborophila davidi* in the Cat Loc Nature Reserve, Vietnam. The researchers made 25 sightings of the partridge, previously known only from a single specimen collected in 1927, in a variety of habitats including scrub, bamboo and secondary evergreen forest. Large areas of primary forest in the reserve - which is unprotected despite supporting Vietnam's only population of Javan Rhinoceros - are being cleared for cashew nut cultivation.

* * *

SURPRISE SUCCESS

In *Cage & Aviary Birds*, 27th September 1997, Piet Kraan described breeding the Black-headed Waxbill *Estrilda atricapilla* in the Netherlands. When one of the five eggs broke in the first clutch, causing the others to stick together, he managed to rescue two of them which he placed in the nest of a pair of Black-crowned Waxbills *E. nonnula*, which had started to lay at the same time. When the time came to ring the young, he found two Black-crowned Waxbills and one Black-headed Waxbill in the nest. In the meantime the Black-headed Waxbills nested again and succeeded in raising five young. The latter had red rumps but lacked any red on the flanks and were rather dull versions of their parents.

* * *

NEW BIRD BOOKS

New titles in the *Pica Press Catalogue 97/98* include *Parrots, A Guide to the Parrots of the World*, *Rails, A Guide to the Rails*, *Crakes and Coots of the World* (due June 1998), *Pigeons and Doves*, described as 'dedicated to their field identification' (also due June 1998), *Birds of Liberia*, *Birds of Somalia* and *A Field Guide to Birds of The Gambia and Senegal*. Further information is available from Christopher Helm, Pica Press, The Banks, Mountfield, Nr. Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5JY. Tel:01580 880561/ Fax:01580 880541.

HATCHED UNDER BENGALESE

John Harvey, of Devizes, Wiltshire, keeps mainly small seedeaters most of which are Estrildids, and recently succeeded in breeding a Yellow-winged Pytilia *Pytilia hyprogrammica*, perhaps better known on dealers' lists as the Red-faced Pytilia. The birds built in a nest basket and the youngster was reared on a seed mixture, egg food and whatever insects the parents could catch in the aviary which measures 6ft x 4ft x 6ft high (approx. 1.8m x 1.2m x 1.8m high) with a shelter.

John had for some time longed to breed the Blue-billed Mannikin *Lonchura bicolor*. Over the years numerous nests were built and eggs laid, some of which hatched, but no young were reared. So, a friend, Brian Humphreys, of Trowbridge, offered to put the next clutch under a pair of his Bengalese. These were housed in a breeding cage 2ft long x 18in x 18in (approx. 61cm long x 46cm x 46cm) with a nest-box, and of the four eggs, three hatched and all three young fledged. Brian has found that Bengalese like these which take mealworms make the best foster parents. They run the mealworms through their beaks to extract the innards and discard the skins which Brian says are too tough for small seedeaters. He has found that Bengalese will generally learn how to do this by watching each other. The birds also have E.M.P. softfood and this was also fed to the young.

The three young mannikins closely resembled their parents except that they were brownish black, rather than glossy black and, rather than white, were yellowish, not unlike the colour that white surfaces become when subjected to cigarette smoke over a long period, as happens in the smoking room of a public house.

Brian keeps records of his birds so that he knows which pairs of Bengalese are the best foster parents. Using Bengalese he has also bred Red-billed Firefinches *Lagonosticta senegala*, Blue-capped Waxbills *Uraeginthus cyanocephala*, Cordon-bleus *U. bengalus*, Purple Grenadiers *U. ianthinogaster* and Red-winged Pytilias *P. phoenicoptera* (the following year the pytilias reared their own young).

During 1997 Brian has bred 12 Cuban Finches *Tiaris canora*, all of which were reared by their parents. They raised the first brood in a 6ft x 18in x 18in (approx. 1.83m x 46cm x 46cm) breeding cage, before being transferred to a communal flight which they shared with other waxbills and finches. The broods were of three, one, two, four and two young. Each time the pair used the same nest basket, using coconut fibre, horse and donkey hair to make the cup-shaped nest. The eggs were speckled with reddish brown. Within a week of the young fledging, the female started to lay again, and about two weeks after the young had left the nest, the parents started to attack them. They were fed a foreign bird seed mixture.

NEAR-THREATENED DUCK

The Pelew Island Grey Duck *Anas superciliosa pelewensis*, also known as the Lesser Grey Duck, has been identified as being of interest for the American Zoo and Aquarium Association's Anseriform Taxon Advisory Group. This duck is listed as near-threatened throughout its range by the IUCN Red List of Threatened Animals. The AZA Anseriform TAG would like to locate the holders of Pelew Island Grey Ducks in the USA and Canada. It has already located three males and placed them with Sylvan Heights Waterfowl in North Carolina. So now the priority is to locate sufficient females. It would like to keep a core breeding group at Sylvan Heights until the number has increased, but is also open to other options. If you would like to find out more about the management programme and how to participate, you should contact: - Doug Piekarz, Department of Ornithology, Wildlife Conservation Society, Bronx Zoo, 2300 Southern Blvd., Bronx, New York 10460, USA. Tel: 718-220-5053/Fax: 718-220-7114/E-mail :DMP96@prodigy.com.

* * *

REVISED EDITIONS

Australian Birdkeeper Publications has recently published revised editions of *A Guide to Asiatic Parrots* and *A Guide to Neophema & Psephotus Grass Parrots*. Both these new revised editions are priced at A\$23.95 each, plus A\$3.00 post and handling in Australia or A\$7.00 by airmail overseas. Further details are available from:- Australian Birdkeeper Publications, P.O. Box 6288, Tweed Heads South, NSW. 2486, Australia. Tel: 07 5590 7777 Fax: 07 5590 7130/E-mail: birdkeeper@birdkeeper.com.au/Internet:<http://www.birdkeeper.com.au>.

* * *

ANGLO-DUTCH AWARD

Double Dutch Avian Products, the sole UK agents for Witte Molen and the suppliers of other Dutch bird products, which has supported the Avicultural Society by advertising in our magazine, recently won the Tulip Computers Trophy for British small businesses in the 16th Anglo-Dutch Awards for Enterprise organised by the Netherlands British Chamber of Commerce. Double Dutch's new address is:- Pheasants Nest Farm, Smorral Lane, Bedworth, Warks. CV12 ONL. Tel:01676 540608/Fax:01676 540408.

* * *

A SUGGESTION FOR A NEW AWARD

by Philip Schofield

The Society's medal is awarded for the first captive breeding of a species in Great Britain or Ireland. When instigated, the award served to encourage aviculturists to breed birds. This was a novel idea - most birds were caught in the wild, and accounts of 'first breedings' furnished much new data about their habits. It did not matter if breeding stopped at the first medal-winning generation; there were always plenty more in the wild.

At the close of the twentieth century, much has changed. There are, quite simply, fewer species left to be bred 'for the first time'. Currently, the medal is available only to a small proportion of our members; those who cannot afford expensive 'new' species from the wild and those who live abroad are debarred from the award.

Let us look at some documented achievements in aviculture, that have made a lasting contribution to our pursuit. In the *Avicultural Magazine* for November-December 1950, Norman Nicholson described his work with the Red-headed Parrot Finch *Erythrura psittacea*. He bred these birds through 18 generations, starting with wild birds imported in 1932, and kept a stock going through the Second World War. The many Red-headed Parrot Finches of today may include descendants of Mr Nicholson's birds. As he said, '...it is a great achievement to win a coveted medal for a first breeding, but the continuous successful breeding of a species brings its own particular reward'. To my mind this reward is threefold:

1. The successful breeder passes on the knowledge of 'how to do it', enabling others to emulate his or her success.

2. They also pass on the birds that have been produced, to be enjoyed by future generations as aviary subjects and, if necessary, to replenish depleted wild populations.

3. Prospective bird breeders are inspired by the writings of those already enjoying success. In this context, I have a favourite article among my *Avicultural Magazine* back numbers (totalling about two-thirds of the run). This is 'My Birds in 1971', by Dr S. B. Kendall, in the January-February 1972 issue. There he described breeding successes in a collection restricted to five species. Most of us keep too many birds; I have over 30 species in a medium-sized town garden, and sometimes wish I had the self-control needed to give six times the attention to a sixth of this number. Dr Kendall had long term success with all five species, and many of their descendants must still be about. I have carried on in a small way with the Dwarf Turtle Doves *Streptopelia tranquebarica* that he cherished for 30 years.



Pyper, Stewart. 1997. "Duncan Bolton, Bristol Zoological Gardens, Clifton Bristol Bs8 3ha. The Society's Visit To Birdland." *The Avicultural magazine* 103(3), 133–143.

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