

## THE NEW PENGUIN DEVELOPMENT AT WHIPSNADE

by Nick Lindsay

During the winter of 1998-1999 Whipsnade Wild Animal Park completely redeveloped its penguin enclosure following a successful fund-raising campaign run by the keeping staff. In some ways the decision to redevelop the area was a bold one as, although showing the ravages of time, this area continued to produce breeding successes for all three species - Humboldt Penguin *Spheniscus humboldti*, Rockhopper Penguin *Eudyptes chrysocome* and King Penguin *Aptenodytes patagonica*. It was recognised by the keepers however, that each species has different requirements and the area was really too small to provide sufficient opportunities for the three. The aim of the redevelopment, therefore, was to provide a larger area of water and for this to be of a greater depth (3m (approx. 10ft)) than previously available, to provide a more challenging land space and to provide a better setting overall for the birds and visitors. Because of the increasing problem of malaria in the UK and to keep costs down it was decided to redevelop the existing area which has as good a natural air conditioning system as one could ask for in southern England (for those who don't know, it is situated high on the Dunstable Downs).

The original pool has been maintained with a second pool built adjacent to this but at a different level. The shape of this was very much determined by the existing landscape and the planning authorities. This extension allowed the provision of a greater land area in a more exposed site with the aim of encouraging the penguins to cover more ground and gradients. Between the two pools a rock mound has been developed with water flowing down this into each pool. Pumps circulate the water through sand filters and UV filters before it flows down the waterfalls within which shingle traps have been incorporated to act as a natural (and additional) filtration system. Each pool has an independent system so a pump or filtration failure will affect only one pool and not the other. The land area has been landscaped using wonderful Welsh slate and granite along with sand, shingle and cobbles. The area, both inside and around the outside, has been planted with dwarf conifers, pampas grass and other tussock grass varieties which amazingly survived the attention of the penguins during the first year.

Although the penguins were returned to the new area in time for the 1999 breeding season only a few Humboldt Penguins bred. The activity of all species has increased tremendously and the Rockhoppers, in particular, have made use of even the biggest rocks, often each individual claiming a rock for itself on which to rest during the day. The King Penguins walk around the whole area and are quite happy to walk up the waterfalls rather



than taking an easier route. All the species use the deeper pools. The sand areas, and in particular the slate slabs, are very much appreciated by the penguins and in the summer misters are used in some of these areas to cool the penguins. The quality of the water has remained good although algal growth has occurred on the sides of the pools. This year a vacuum cleaning system is being used to remove this and the pumps are producing a stronger current in the pools, as well as circulating the water. Fibreglass nest-boxes have been developed for the Humboldt Penguins. These can be removed and cleaned at the end of each season.

A completely new information system has been introduced with both static boards and interactive information disks on all penguin species. The public viewing areas have been greatly enhanced and although there is no underwater viewing visitors can see the penguins swimming in both pools. The setting is probably one of the most spectacular any penguin exhibit can offer and visitors spend a considerable amount of time in this corner of the park.

*Nick Lindsay is Curator at Whipsnade Wild Animal Park, Dunstable, Bedfordshire LU6 2LF, England. Tel: 01582 872171/Fax: 01582 872649.*

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## PLANET PENGUIN

The largest penguin exhibit in the world, Planet Penguin, was opened last November at Loro Parque, Tenerife, Canary Islands. The spectacular main exhibit houses 65 King Penguins *Aptenodytes patagonicus*, 46 Rockhopper Penguins *Eudyptes chrysocome*, 40 Gentoo Penguins *Pygoscelis papua* and two Kelp Gulls *Larus dominicanus*. Most of the King Penguins were hatched from eggs collected during the expedition to South Georgia, described by Roger G. Sweeney in the *Avicultural Magazine* 104,4:169-179. From the 117 eggs brought back to Loro Parque, 70 chicks were hatched of which 51 were reared successfully. The other King Penguins, along with the Rockhopper and Gentoo Penguins, were bred at Sea World in the USA. A second exhibit displays 23 Humboldt Penguins *Spheniscus humboldti* obtained from Penscynor Wildlife Park (south Wales, UK), which closed in 1998.



## THE SOCIETY'S VISIT TO WEM

by Stewart Pyper

On Sunday, September 19th last year members of the Society and their guests visited the collection of birds and mammals belonging to Will Harrison and his wife Libby. Will, who has been a member of the Society for many years, with his wife, maintains a large collection of birds ranging from small passerines such as tanagers up to rheas. About 40 members and their guests accepted the invitation and the collection was viewed during overcast weather, with the sun eventually breaking through after a quite horrendous morning of incessant rain.

There is a tropical house in which viewing the birds was at times difficult due to the luxurious plant life, however, we managed to see tanagers, zosterops, Roulroul Partridges and Golden Heart Doves. Within the traditional walled garden, Chilean Flamingos and Demoiselle Cranes live at liberty. The aviaries around the inside of the wall are spacious and well planted, except those in which certain pheasants such as Monals are housed. Here, we also saw White-cheeked Touracos and Red-winged Starlings both of which had bred during 1999, also Violaceous Touracos. We also saw laughing thrushes, Satyr and Temminck's Tragopans, Edwards' and Argus Pheasants as well as species such as Black-necked Stilts.

A small temperate greenhouse houses Fairy Bluebirds, Emerald Starlings and Luzon Bleeding Heart Doves, here again the vegetation was ideal for the birds but not for viewing them. The emphasis is on breeding whenever possible and with this in mind, the aviaries are not overstocked. Wonga Pigeons were seen, also a breeding pair of Red-legged Seriema with their youngsters. Snowy Owls which had bred in 1999 were seen, as were Stanley Cranes and Sclater's Curassows.

There is quite a large collection of waterfowl amongst which are Red-breasted Geese and a very aggressive pair of Cereopsis Geese, also White-winged Wood Ducks. The latter, on loan from the Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, are regular breeders. This year, eight out of nine eggs hatched and six of the young went to the trust's new Wetland Centre at Barn Elms, west London.

A large paddock in front of the house has recently been enclosed with fox-proof fencing and it is Will's intention to develop this area. We also saw a selection of mammals, including Llamas, Red Squirrels, Malaysian Prevost's Squirrels, Maras, Parma and Bennett's Wallabies, and Capybaras.

Our hosts very kindly provided tea after our tour of the collection, and the Society thanked them for their kindness in inviting us to view their varied collection.



## COUNCIL MEETING

A Council Meeting was held Sunday, 12th March 2000 at Wargrave, Berkshire.

The following members were present: Miss R. M. Ezra (President), R. C. J. Sawyer (Vice President), K. J. Lawrence (Chairman), M. Ellis (Hon. Editor), Mrs L. Gardner, R. E. Oxley, S. Pyper, J. Trollope, Ms R. Wiseman.

The Hon. Editor reported that the next magazine (No.1, 2000) would be sent out shortly, and that he had enough material for the following magazine (this issue). Material is needed, however, for future issues. The Hon. Editor said that he is thinking of using a colour photo of the Bali Starling for the front cover of the magazine, if he can find a high quality one which is suitable for the purpose. The cost of publishing the magazine this year is likely to remain unchanged and there will again be approximately 12 colour photos. The Society has now purchased a fax machine for the Hon. Editor. The number is:- +44 (0)1208 812260. He would prefer that it is used for short communications only, and that full articles continue to be sent by post.

It was decided that the D. H. S. Risdon Award for the best article in the magazine during the previous year should go to Greg Bockheim and Shannon Mezzell for The Black Crake *Amaurornis flavirostris* an Effective Cooperative Breeder at Disney's Animal Kingdom, Florida, USA (*Avicultural Magazine* 105, 1:12-21). Eric Callaghan was awarded the Society's medal for the first breeding of the Bearded Barbet *Lybius dubius* in Great Britain and Ireland.

The Hon. Secretary/Treasurer missed the meeting due to illness, however, Council Members were of the opinion that the Society is in a sound position financially. This was confirmed later when the account for 1999 was circulated to Council Members.

Since the subjects were discussed at the Council Meeting, Avicultural Society Vice Presidents, C. J. S. Marler and R. C. J. Sawyer, were among the speakers at Avian 2000, which was supported by the Society, our website ([www.avisoc.co.uk](http://www.avisoc.co.uk)) is up and running and the Society had a stand at The Festival of Birds held Sunday, May 14th, at Shepton Mallet, and at Exotics Quest 2000 held Sunday, May 21st, at Bristol Vet School.

The President's Garden Party will be held Sunday, July 16th, and the Autumn Social Meeting, Sunday, September 17th at Twycross Zoo, Leicestershire, followed after lunch there by a visit to Andrew and Audrey Perkins' collection at Netherseal, Nr. Swadlincote, Derbyshire.



## NEWS & VIEWS

### THE SOCIETY'S WEBSITE

The Society has now got a website - <http://www.avisoc.co.uk> - which we hope you will visit and encourage others to visit too, who may be interested in joining the Society.

As well as information about the Avicultural Society, the contents of the current issue of the magazine, notes for authors and details of how to join the Society, there is also a list of the contents of recent back issues. Eventually we hope to list the contents of all the back issues we still have in stock, however, this is likely to take a little time. We are keen to sell as many back issues as we can, both to realise the money and because they take up so much storage space. They are a fantastic source of information and cost just £3 (roughly US\$4.50) each, including post & packing.

There is also a 'bulletin board' on the site, on which you are invited to post items of interest to others. We have already received postings from the USA, Canada and elsewhere. It is an especially quick way to promulgate news of developments, such as your latest breeding results.

I would like include a 'swap shop-cum-marriage bureau' (for birds) - called the 'nest site' perhaps - where members can list birds they require to make-up breeding pairs and/or surplus birds others may be looking for to make-up breeding pairs of their own. All arrangements for any such swaps and matters arising from these will have to remain the responsibility of the participants.

The website was designed by Richard Reeves, who would value your comments. His e-mail address is: [reeves@astronode.co.uk](mailto:reeves@astronode.co.uk). The Society hopes to shortly set-up its own direct e-mail link with members. It is also considering accepting advertisements for inclusion on the website.

The Society reserves the right to remove any material posted on the website that is considered unsuitable for whatever reason.

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### HIGHLY RESPECTED AUTHOR

Derek Goodwin, the highly respected author of *Pigeons and Doves of the World* and *Estrildid finches of the world*, as well as numerous articles in the *Avicultural Magazine* and other journals, had his 80th birthday earlier this year and was recently elected an Hon. Life Member of the Avicultural Society.



## JAILED FOR TWO AND A HALF YEARS

At Newcastle Crown Court on April 14th, Harry Sissens was found guilty of illegally importing into the UK three Lear's Macaws *Anodorhynchus leari* and six Blue-headed Macaws *Ara couloni*. He was jailed for two and a half years. He was also charged with illegally selling a Palm Cockatoo *Probosciger aterrimus* and Hyacinth Macaws *A. hyacinthinus*, but cleared of those charges on the orders of the judge. Harry Sissens was arrested after Customs & Excise officers raided his property in north Yorkshire, in April 1998, and seized more than 140 birds, including the nine macaws. He was alleged to have bought birds on a number of trips to Yugoslavia and Slovakia and smuggled them into the UK.

It was reported later that Harry Sissens planned to appeal against the sentence, and that the Brazilian government has asked for the return of the Lear's Macaws, and the hope is that they will become part of a controlled breeding programme.

It was also reported, though less widely, that by November last year, 16 of the birds seized had died. This was reported to include a Red-vented Cockatoo *Cacatua haematuropygia*, a Palm Cockatoo *P. a. goliathia*, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo *Calyptorhynchus funereus*, a Blue-headed Macaw, two Blue-throated Macaws *A. glaucogularis*, two Red-fronted Macaws *A. rubrogenys*, a Hyacinth Macaw and a Thick-billed Parrot *Rhynchopsitta pachyrhyncha*.

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## FALCON GROUP

Dr Tom Bailey, who with Susan Anderson, wrote about Commonly Encountered Hatching and Post-hatching Problems in Bustards (*Avicultural Magazine* 105,3:114-126), has sent a copy of *Falco* The Newsletter of the Middle East Falcon Research Group, which he co-edits with Dr Nigel Barton. Issue No.15, January 2000, includes items about a new falcon hospital opened by the National Avian Research Center in Abu Dhabi, trichinellosis in raptors in the United Arab Emirates, veterinary aspects of a new falcon release project, and falcon sales in Qatar.

The Middle East Falcon Research Group (PO. Box 45553, Abu Dhabi, UAE) has also published *Microchips and their use in Monitoring Movements of Sakers and Peregrines in Asia and the Middle East*, and is planning to produce a short video of this microchipping scheme which will be distributed to government departments in the exporting countries, CITES, IUCN, TRAFFIC, environmental agencies in the countries of export and falcon hospitals in the Middle East.



## ISLANDS OF HOPE

On the Indonesian island of Seram, Project Bird Watch is helping bird trappers find alternative means of income that will eliminate their dependence on the trade in Moluccan Cockatoos *Cacatua moluccensis* and other wild birds. A canopy platform has been built in Manusela National Park and former bird trappers work there as guides, and admission fees go into a local community development fund. To learn more about this, you can write to Project Bird Watch, c/o Jeannie White, 345 Culver Blvd., Playa del Rey, CA 90293, USA, or visit its website at [www.tpp.org/pbw](http://www.tpp.org/pbw).

Described in *Wildlife Conservation*, April 2000, as 'the first new national park of the new millennium', Morne Diablotin National Park on the Caribbean island of Dominica, straddles the highest volcanic peak in the Caribbean and will offer protection to two rare species, the Imperial Amazon *Amazona imperialis*, of which fewer than 200 survive in the wild, and the Red-necked Amazon *A. arausiaca*. The 10,000 acres (approx. 4,000 hectares) national park will afford protection to about 160 species of birds in all and 55 species of butterflies. If you would like to know more, you can write to the Rare Species Conservatory Foundation, PO. Box 1371, Loxahatchee, Florida 33470, USA, or visit its website at [www.rarespecies.org](http://www.rarespecies.org).

You can also learn more about these two rare Amazons by reading Paul R. Reillo's article about them in the latest issue of *PsittaScene*, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2000. In the same issue, the Editor, Rosemary Low, writes about the discovery in Colombia of a third flock of 20 Yellow-eared Parrots or Conures *Ognorhynchus icterotis*. This has brought the total of known individuals to 82 birds. Elsewhere in the same issue, Rosemary attacks the New Zealand Department of Conservation's decision to attempt to eradicate by trapping and killing (by breaking their necks or lethal injections), and by poisoning and shooting, the feral population of Rainbow Lorikeets *Trichoglossus haematodus moluccanus* that has become established in the Auckland area. For those who do not know, *PsittaScene* is the magazine of the World Parrot Trust, Glanmor House, Hayle, Cornwall TR27 4HP, England.

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## VICE PRESIDENT RETIRES

Avicultural Society Vice President, Christopher Marler, has closed Flamingo Gardens and Zoological Park to the public after 42 years. He has sold many of the birds, keeping only about 100, including flamingos, pelicans, Bald Eagles *Haliaeetus leucocephalus* and lutino Ring-necked Parrakeets *Psittacula krameri*. Christopher has also retained a 40-strong herd of white Fallow Deer, his white wallabies and a pair of American Bison. He will continue to be a Vice President of the Avicultural Society.



## WATERFOWL SALE

Bill Makins has put 220 acre (approx. 90 hectare) Pensthorpe Waterfowl Park and Nature Reserve up for sale. The park, opened in 1988, has more than 120 species of ducks, geese, swans and other waterbirds. The collection includes King Eiders *Somateria spectabilis*, Harlequin Ducks *Histrionicus histrionicus*, African Pygmy Geese *Netta auritus* and Red-breasted Geese *Branta ruficollis*. Offers of more than £2.6 million (approx. US\$4.1 million) are being sought for the estate near Fakenham, four miles (6.4km) from the north Norfolk coast, which as well as the waterfowl park and nature reserve, includes meadows, lakes, woodland and farmland with four sites of scientific interest, Pensthorpe Hall and three cottages.

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## LOST BIRDS REDISCOVERED

In a recent issue of *The Shield* magazine, members of five expeditions reported on their experiences participating in the BP Conservation Programme, a joint initiative between BP Amoco, BirdLife International and Fauna & Flora International. Jon Riley described how after searching for six months, Action Sampiri rediscovered the Caerulean Paradise-Flycatcher *Eutrichomyias rowleyi*, over 120 years after it was last seen on the tiny Indonesian island of Sangihe, between Sulawesi and the Philippines. Julia Jones described Project Diadema's expedition to New Caledonia, home of the Kagu *Rhynochetos jubatus*, where members of the expedition rediscovered the Owlet Nightjar *Aegotheles savesi*, which had not been seen since it was discovered at the end of the nineteenth century.

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## SIR PETER SCOTT'S LEGACY

On the site of some redundant Victorian reservoirs beside the River Thames in west London, on May 26th, The Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust opened The Wetland Centre (website [www.wwt.org.uk](http://www.wwt.org.uk)). Easily reached from central London by public transport, it has a collection of captive waterfowl, including Madagascar Teal *Anas bernieri*, New Zealand Blue Duck *Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos* and Hawaiian Goose or Nene *Branta sandvicensis*, and attracts wild species such as Shoveler *A. clypeata*, Pochard *Aythya ferina*, Canada Goose *B. canadensis*, Lapwing *Vanellus vanellus*, Kingfisher *Alcedo atthis*, Little Egret *Egretta garzetta*, and even Spoonbill *Platalea leucorodia* and Ortolan Bunting *Emberiza hortulana*.



## STEPPING DOWN

Mike Reynolds, founder and Hon. Director of the World Parrot Trust, is to stand down at the end of this year. Mike will be 70 in February next year, and after more than a decade in charge, wants to make way for a new Director. He has already handed over the running of Paradise Park, at Hayle, Cornwall, to his son Nick and daughter Alison.

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## BACK AT THE SHOW

The Society again had a stand at the National Exhibition of Cage & Aviary Birds, held last December at the Telford International Centre. It enables Officers of the Society to meet members both old and new, and to publicise the Society. The stand, managed by Council Member Mike Curzon, a Director of the Tropical Bird Gardens at Rode, Somerset, was somewhat 'tucked away' this time and as a result we were not as successful in enrolling new members as in previous years.

The sunbird class was judged by Raymond Sawyer, who gave the first prize to Mr & Mrs A. Tugman's male Amethyst Sunbird *Nectarinia amethystina*. This bird went on to be judged best nectar feeder, best foreign bird and best bird in show, winning the Sir Richard Haddon Trophy.

This year's show is returning to the NEC in Birmingham on the weekend of December 2nd-3rd. At the time of writing, it is yet to be confirmed whether the Society will be offered a stand at the show. If as we hope, we are, will anyone willing to help run it contact Stewart Pyper at the address given on the inside of the front cover of this magazine, or by telephoning him on 01373 836293.

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## PRIVATE EYE

If you would like to keep a closer watch on what is (or is not) happening in your nest-boxes and/or aviaries, PRO-CAM Ltd., John St. Works, Brierfield, Nelson, Lancs. BB9 5NX (Tel:01282 697779/Fax:01282 698677/ E-mail:john@procamltd.com/website:www.procamltd.com), can supply waterproof and dustproof, infra-red cameras specially designed for placing in nest-boxes, as well as a comprehensive range other equipment suitable for observation and security purposes.

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## CURL-CRESTED ARACARI BRED

The *Zoological Society of San Diego, 1999 Physical Inventory*, has on the front cover a colour photo of a Curl-crested Aracari *Pteroglossus beauharnaesii* nestling hatched at San Diego last year. Other species hatched there during 1999 included a Harpy Eagle *Harpia harpyja*, a Crowned Eagle *Stephanoaetus coronatus*, a White-faced Pigeon *Turacoena manadensis*, a Western Green-naped Pheasant Pigeon *Otidiphaps nobilis nobilis*, two Superb Birds of Paradise *Lophorina superba feminina* and 10 Empress of Germany's Birds of Paradise *Paradisaea raggiana augustaevictoria*.

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## SOUTH AFRICAN PARRAKEETS

The latest *Newsletter* of BirdLife South Africa, Vol.2, No.1, 2000, includes references to several sightings of Ring-necked or Rose-ringed Parrakeets *Psittacula krameri*. While Ron Searle describes passing a pair of large parrakeets perched on telephone wires when driving north of Midrand, and reversing to confirm that they were Ring-necked Parrakeets (which have colonised the northern suburbs of Greater Johannesburg, but have not yet been recorded in the Midrand area), only to discover that the birds were a pair of Patagonian Conures or Burrowing Parrakeets *Cyanoliseus patagonus*. You can visit the BirdLife South Africa website at <http://www.birdlife.org.za>.

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## A POSSIBLE EXPLANATION

A possible explanation as to the origin of the two parrakeets perched on the telephone wires mentioned in the previous item (above), may have come recently in another news item published elsewhere about the opening of Lory Park, described as: 'a new zoo dedicated to parrots and other birds, located in Midrand.' It is claimed to be the largest bird zoo in Africa, and a sanctuary and breeding centre for parrots, including macaws, Amazons, cockatoos, lorries and African species. It also aims to be an educational venue for school children, the general public and bird enthusiasts.

\* \* \*



## DONATIONS RECEIVED IN 1999

The Society is most grateful to the following members for their generous support:

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J. R. Padgett	R. C. J. Sawyer

## DULCIE COOKE AWARD

Ken Ashken, the son of the late Dulcie Cooke, who was an enthusiastic supporter of the Society and attended many social events and wrote for the magazine, and whose Obituary was published in Vol.104, No.3, pp.143-144, has generously given the Society a sum of money to create the Dulcie Cooke Award in his late mother's memory. The Council has decided that this award, in the form of an engraved plaque, will be awarded annually for what in the Council's opinion is the best photo submitted to illustrate an article in the magazine.

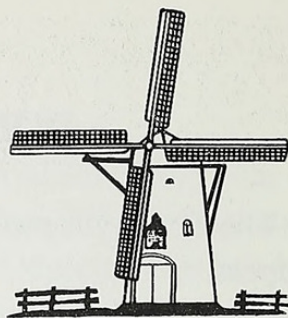
Mrs June Bailey has donated to the Avicultural Society on behalf of the late Dulcinea Rogers, also known as Mrs Dulcie Cooke, and on behalf of the late Mr Freddie Cooke, the royalties from their books about bird keeping which were given to her.

The Society thanks Mrs J. Bailey and Mr K. R. Ashken for their generosity.



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Lindsay, Nick. 2000. "The New Penguin Development At Whipsnade." *The Avicultural magazine* 106(2), 85–86.

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