

Pencynor Wild Life Park.

Perhaps the most important development at the Park since the publication of the last Newsletter, has been our expansion into a 5 acre wooded slope on the west side of the Garden.

This beautiful area is covered with maturing deciduous Larch, and some Oak, Hornbeam, Willow and Rhododendron. The land slopes down from the foot of a large 40 foot waterfall tumbling down the face of the escarpment, but flattens out to provide room for the two new lakes which have been excavated there. Although it is planned to have some new exhibits in this area, it is our intention to leave the greater part in its natural beauty, only constructing a path for ease of access to the spectacular lookout over the Vale of Neath, at the top of the waterfall.

Mr. David Riordan, B.Sc. Dip. Ed., the former Curator of Mammals and Education Officer here, has recently departed for a new post of Educational Officer at Melbourne Zoo, Victoria, Australia.

During his time here, Mr. Riordan was responsible for the inauguration of a highly successful and much acclaimed programme of "Education within the Zoo", which was established here last year.

Mr. Riordan's place as Educational Officer has been taken by Mr. Malcolm Smith, who also lectures at the West Glamorgan Institute for Higher Education, School of Photography.

EDUCATIONAL NEWS.

At present a 16mm colour sound film is being produced called Amazon Quest. The film traces the journey made by Mr. Hale to the Amazon Basin, near Leticia and portraying the abundant wildlife and natives of the area. It is hoped the film will be ready for showing in the Autumn of this year. B.B.C. Wales have already used some of the footage on their childrens' programme "Billidowcar".

Anyone wishing to view this Film can apply to the Park. This film and the Komodo Dragon film will be shown free of charge.

A series of information sheets are being produced to accompany the film. The sheets will be prepared under the headings of: Amazonas - covering geology, plant life, animal life, mammals, birds, reptiles, fish, insects, population, agriculture, economy, exports and transportation. Amazon Rain Forest covering - the forest, flora, relief and drainage, soil types, vegetation and fauna. Amazon River covering - geography, climate, soils and vegetation, fish, fauna, aborigines. Ticuna Indians covering - habitat, agriculture, fishing, hunting and fruit gathering.

Pencynor Wild Life Park will be featured in an Exhibition at the Royal Welsh Show, Builth Wells, in July. The exhibition entitled "Work and Play in West Glamorgan", is being produced by West Glamorgan County Council. Pencynor will have a small stand in the Exhibition, where visitors can gather information about the Park, and view a series of slides in a tape slide sequence.

There are plans to produce a new 16mm film about the Wildlife Park. At present, the script is being planned, and it is anticipated that filming will begin during the Summer Holidays. If conditions are favourable, high speed cinematography will be used to portray animal movement.

To date two tape slide sequences have been produced, both with commentary. These are intended for school visits, one for Primary Schools and the other for Secondary Schools. A further series is planned and production will take place during the Winter months. In the future, it is hoped that a greater use will be made of the audio-visual material for school education. This will include high speed cinematography, films and video packages.

The Education Department feels that its aim is not only to provide a service to schools, but also to the general public. When the Educational facility is built, it will provide a complete service to schools, both in the preparation of written material and audio visual productions. Exhibitions and Film Shows can be arranged to portray life in foreign countries, as well as various aspects of Welsh life. During School holidays it will provide a valuable information centre for visitors from Home and Abroad. With this in mind, it is planned to produce either a tape slide sequence, or a film about the tourist attractions within easy reach of the Park. Commentaries can be produced in English or Welsh and foreign versions. Local craftsmen and artists could be invited to exhibit their work at the Centre.

MAMMAL NEWS.

One of the most exciting acquisitions to the collection, has been the purchase of two pairs of the lovely Mayotte Brown Lemur, primitive primates whose closest relatives are the monkeys of nearby Africa.

Hailing from the island of Madagascar, the home of many rare and endangered species, this race of the Brown Lemur is extremely rare in captivity, being represented at no more than a dozen other collections in the world. With a minimal wild population, it is hoped that we can make a real contribution to the build-up of captive stocks by successfully breeding from our small colony.

These four captive-bred specimens were brought by Mr. Hale from the Collection of Count Simon-de-Bender in Southern France. An especially designed travelling cage had to be built to meet the stringent requirements of the Customs and Health Authorities, to comply with the anti-Rabies precautions now in force.

On arrival at Pencsycnor, the Lemurs were placed in their Government-approved Quarantine Quarters where they were to spend the next six months. While in quarantine the animals were subject to a weekly inspection from the Parks Consultant Vet, and periodic checks from the Home Office Representative. These precautions, elaborate though they may seem, are designed to ensure that no transmissible disease, which may be brought into the Country, has the chance to spread or contaminate other live stock.

The Lemurs settled down very quickly in their new quarters, one of the males soon establishing himself as a leader of the group, and eventually mating with both females. Although the subordinate male was made pretty miserable during the short mating season, by the bullying of the dominant male, this soon passed and they all now live happily together again.

After a gestation period of 128 days the females both produced one baby each. These were their first babies, both females having only just reached maturity, and, as is unfortunately common with "first time mothers" in the monkey world, both babies were subsequently lost largely due to their mothers inexperience.

Both we and the Lemurs learned something from this sad experience. The Lemurs it is hoped learned about giving birth and how they should hold and feed their new babies, and we learned how to recognise when something is going wrong and when we should remove the babies from their mother.

One baby died shortly after birth when apparently it fell from its mother and died from exposure. The second died after three days when it was taken from its own mother by the bereaved female, who did not however feed it. The baby weakened from lack of food and fell, damaging itself while doing so and dying shortly afterward.

Next year pregnant females shall be isolated before giving birth and for some time afterwards to ensure that both mother and the baby are doing well, before they are reunited with the other members of the group.

Another new arrival of special interest to our two female Woolly Monkeys has been the arrival of a fine, young captive-bred male from Banham Zoo in Norfolk. This handsome fellow is only five years old, but has already been seen to mate with both females. It is felt that he is perhaps a little too young to breed successfully as yet, but his enthusiasm augers well for the future for our little group.

Also from Banham Zoo we acquired pairs of the pretty Common Marmoset and the lovely Silvery Marmoset. These tiny monkeys are all becoming increasingly rare in the wild state, due entirely to the wholesale destruction of their native habitat. It is hoped that we and similar organisations can do something worthwhile to save these species from extinction, by organising captive breeding programs for them with the intention to eventually return colonies to safe, Government controlled Reserves and Parks. Our Marmosets can be seen in the large tropical house.

The Side Striped Squirrels which were acquired from Jersey Zoo two years ago, continue to breed well, the colony now having grown to six specimens. The young males have to be separated from their parents shortly after leaving the nest, as the adult male becomes very aggressive towards them. These can also be seen in the large tropical house.

The Vervet Monkey colony also continues to grow, with the mother having produced two additional babies since the publication of the last Newsletter. The two older sons however had to be disposed of to other collections, as they were starting to 'gang up' on the adult male, and gave him a couple of nasty bites. Now, however, all is peaceful with the old male again 'ruling the roost' with his wife and daughters in constant attendance. It is interesting to see how the young females take care of the new babies, nursing and cuddling them, and thereby gaining experience of what to expect when they have babies of their own, as well as giving the old female a rest from the baby.

One of the more unusual acquisitions was a pair of Dama Wallabies. These pretty little animals settled down well in their large paddock and the pair was soon seen to be mating. We were very pleased to see the females pouch start to swell, indicating that mating had been successful and the "joey" had safely made its way into the pouch after being born, where it was growing well. Eventually the movement of the baby within the pouch could be seen quite clearly and once or twice he poked his head out. Sadly he was not to survive, for late one afternoon he ventured out of the pouch and for some reason could not find his way back. He was found first thing next morning cold and stiff, dead from exposure. His coat had not yet grown long enough to protect him from the cold.

It has been decided that when next the female is found to be carrying a "joey" that she shall be confined to the house until the baby is agile enough to pursue her and make its way back into the pouch.

Further mammal acquisitions are: a young female Lama; a pair of Canadian Marmots, which have a new, specially designed enclosure; two female spot-nosed monkeys, a young male Kinkajou bred at Blackpool Zoo and now paired up with our solitary female; and finally a pair the dainty African Pygmy Goats which can be seen in Pets Corner.

Other births have taken place with Sika Deer, Badgers, and the usual Gerbils, Hamsters, etc. of Pets Corner.

BIRD NEWS.

We have had an eventful time with the bird collection, with an assortment of surprises, disappointments and successes.

Perhaps our greatest disappointment was the loss of our two King Penguins last year due to heat exhaustion. Prior to their death one of the birds had produced a single large egg which it began to incubate, keeping the egg warm, sandwiched between her feet and her ample stomach. We were of course very excited at this event but completely taken aback when "father" also produced an egg which "he" also started incubating. Shortly after the eggs were laid we experienced a period of extremely hot weather, with temperatures soaring up into the 80's which the penguins simply could not endure, when sadly they died.

The Humboldts Penguins also produced a number of eggs in their burrows around the Penguin Pool, and great excitement ensued when two chicks were eventually hatched.

Percy the Pelican had to be barred from the Penguin area at that time as Pelicans are known to eat baby birds. All went well until the birds reached ten days old, then they died one after the other. On post-mortem, it was found that they had died from Aspergillosis, a fungus disease which fills the lungs of the young birds making breathing extremely difficult, while at the same time producing poisons.

This disease is very common in all birds, but Penguins are especially vulnerable. Coming as they do from the South Pole where the atmosphere is pure and uncontaminated by either pollution or this fungi, they are especially prone to infection. This can usually be controlled in established, adult birds by the basic requirements of good management, but infant birds are far less resilient, and so often succumb.

We shall try to provide as sterile a nesting area as possible in time for the next breeding season, and hope to succeed in rearing the penguins safely past the critical period of infancy.

Our Cuban Flamingos are currently a source of great interest, as they appear to be attempting to nest. This is especially unusual as we have only a very small colony of two pairs of this particular species, usually a much larger number of birds is a pre-requisite to stimulate pairs to breed. Both pairs have taken over one of the small, concrete cones provided as nests for them, and added quantities of clay and mud from the area around. Much bickering is taking place as to who has which mound, and which of the pair should stand on it and work. Flamingoes are very strange and unusual birds which are uncommonly bred in captivity, although the Wildlife Trust at Slimbridge has succeeded in breeding four of the seven forms.

We shall be especially pleased if these birds succeed in nesting, not only because they belong to perhaps the most beautiful species, but also because this display of their interest and determination clearly illustrates their approval of our methods of management.

Every year at this time, we are inundated with calls for help from people who find young birds apparently helpless and abandoned in their garden, or while out for a walk. Unfortunately, most people respond to this apparent desertion by taking the baby with them and trying to hand rear it, which is when they turn to us for help.

Our first response is; "how long ago did you find it, and can you take it back?" All too often these fledgling birds have only left the nest a matter of hours before, and simply have not yet learnt to avoid people. Invariably the birds parents know exactly where it is and are continuing to feed it, but of course their distress and calls are unrecognisable to most people, who believe they are doing the right thing in 'rescuing' the baby bird.

So please, before you 'save' the fledgling stand about 40 ft. away from it for 10 minutes or quarter of an hour, and watch the parents come down to feed it and entice the baby bird to a more sheltered spot. Only if the bird is truly abandoned or damaged in some way should it be removed, when we shall be pleased to offer whatever help or advice is appropriate.

During the last twelve months we have succeeded in breeding a number of species of birds and have acquired a few more. The following lists the birds we have bred successfully.

Bare-eyed Cockatoos, Lesser Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, Roseate Cockatoos, Derbyan Parakeets, Elegant Grass Parakeets, Splendid Grass Parakeets, Eastern Rosella, Pale-Head Rosella, Stanley Rosella, Red Rump Parakeet, Crimson Wing Parakeet, Barraband Parakeet, Brown-eared Conures, Cockatiels, Chattering, Webbers, and Mitchells Lories, Gouldian Finches, Spree Starlings, Golden Pheasant, Amherst Pheasant, Blue Peafowl, Mallard.

In addition the following birds bred, but did not succeed in rearing their young: Black Swan, Great Indian Hornbill, Citron Crested Cockatoo, Humboldts Penguins, Blue-spotted Wood Dove, Blue & Gold Macaw, Scarlet Macaw, Chinese Geese, Rosses Touraco, White-cheeked Touraco, Blue Streaked Lory, Webbers Lory, Mitchells Lory.

The following birds were acquired:

- 1 Duivenbodes Lory
- 2 Dusky Lories
- 3 Chattering Lories
- 1 Black Capped Lory
- 1 Yellow Streaked Lory
- 1 Rainbow Lory
- 1 Ornate Lory
- 1 pair of White Pea Fowl
- 1 pair of Blue-cheeked Barbets
- 1 pair of Bleeding Heart Doves
- 1 pair of Cara-Caras
- 1 pair of Blue fronted Amazons
- 1 Mealy Amazon
- 1 pair of Orange-winged Amazons
- 5 pairs of Gouldian Finches
- 1 pair of Parson Finches

VETERINARY NEWS.

We have had a number of recurring veterinary problems with our stock. The most important and dangerous of which, is the infection of the Parrakeets by parasitic intestinal worms. Despite the programme of routine worming formerly carried out, we were still losing birds, especially young birds, to the disease. We have now intensified this programme with a regular fortnightly schedule of anthelmintic drug given on the birds food, in addition to their quarterly catching up and oral dosing. Furthermore, periodic checks are made on faecal samples to keep us informed of the birds current parasitic burden. Remedial action being taken when necessary.

A recurring problem of temporary blindness has been distressing our pair of Peruvian Sea Lions. This has been treated with a variety of antibiotics and dietary supplements, all with no permanent beneficial effect. It was felt that the addition of the 'salt bath' would ease the condition, as would the more frequent cleaning of their pool with the high

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pressure cleaning machine, to reduce algae and sediment. This is now being done and certainly seemed to be helping the condition of their eyes quite noticeably. It is only to be hoped that this is the solution to the problem and not just a temporary respite.

We have lost a number of Spree Starling Chicks to Gapeworm infestation. These unpleasant parasites live in the windpipe of the bird reproducing until they cause death by suffocation.

The adults nest quite regularly but infect their chicks when they are only a few days old. Having such small windpipes the chicks cannot cope with even a few worms and are not strong enough to cough them out, and so choke.

Despite regular treatment of the adults, and recently, treatment of the chicks whilst in the nest, the chicks die on fledging. It is now practice to remove the chicks when they are 10 days old for medication and hand rearing, thus preventing the re-infection which is constantly taking place while they are in the nest.

OTHER NEWS.

At the present time we are constructing the new Chimpanzee Island, the new Gibbon Island, and an adventure playground. These will be completed in about 6 weeks time. We hope to have an official opening of the Chimp House. The lake at the foot of the falls with the viewing room below the water will be completed later in the year.

We are all looking forward with great excitement to the arrival of a pair of 6 year old chimps from Banham Zoo.

Mr. Hale having travelled to North America to visit many Zoos has realized that the new concept of Zoos is that animals are not kept behind bars, but are separated from the public by water.

The felling of trees and therefore giving more light into the forest has proved beneficial within 3 weeks as the grass sown is now as green as the Paddock, and many animals will be kept free to roam this area, and in my opinion this will be the best section of this outstanding Park.

We are finding that many schools are taking advantage of our Educational Programme, we want to encourage this and any assistance we can give during the Winter months in film shows and lecture either at the schools or here in the Park.

Once again Mr. Parry Lewis the Head Gardener and his Assistant Mr. Reg. Osbourne, have done a wonderful job in propagating the flowers and shrubs for 1977, and during the Winter did most of the building work. These two workers do not argue on who does what, they get on with it as all the other staff in the Park, including the catering staff.

I wish to thank all the staff and most of the public for assisting us to make this Park one of the Best in the United Kingdom.