

ZOO

Grapevine

Autumn 2006

Rather late on the Autumn issue of *Zoo Grapevine* I'm afraid, but as you will all know by now punctuality hasn't really been our trademark for quite a number of years. In the end we do deliver the goods and there is always some significant reason for any delay, nor is the end in sight for *Zoo!* magazine either and we are working on the next issue at the moment.

Although this is a rather delayed reaction to events I am bound to mention that this was the strangest year attendance-wise for zoos. It rather seems the summer was too hot and, combined with the World Cup, visitor numbers for zoos and all other manner of attractions were markedly down. That said, autumn was very busy at most zoos and as I write the good weather has continued into November so we will have to see where it all ends up. We will endeavour to be quicker off the mark with the Winter edition of *Zoo Grapevine* but as it won't be next month so it falls to me to wish all our membership a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Thank you for your support each and everyone one of you.

Tim Brown
Chairman

UK NEWS

Belfast

The zoo has recently added Moloch Gibbons to its rather esoteric primate collection. Not surprisingly these apes come from Howletts which is almost the world centre for breeding this endangered Javan animal. Just over 50 specimens are listed in zoos on I.S.I.S. Belfast now has 2.2 and surprisingly this is the first new exhibit to be constructed at the zoo in 10 years. It was officially opened on the 19th July by the Lord Mayor of Belfast.

Red-bellied Lemurs have also been added to the collection with a breeding pair arriving from London. 2007 will see a new exhibit for White-nosed Coatis (*Nasua narica*) open at the top of the zoo. This is another new species and much more unusual in European collections than the Common or Brown Coati. Rather older news is the appointment of Mark Challis as zoo manager but news which I was personally very pleased to see. Belfast is one of my favourite zoos with a very interesting collection - Mark Challis has been responsible for a good deal of the collection profile in his capacity as assistant manager. The future would appear to be an exciting one.

Whipsnade

The famous Brown Bear enclosure is to be redeveloped, although the enclosure still stands up as an outstanding one for these animals there are certainly signs of age such as the rusting, over-spiked fences. A viewing platform will also be provided for the public. The lemur enclosure on the site of the old elephant paddock is also to be converted to a walk-through enclosure.

Marwell

A first UK breeding of the Mishmi Takin was reported at Marwell on the 21st June. The offspring is a male by the name of Chien Po. Britain was the first European country to exhibit a Takin when London received a male on 22nd June 1909.

Marwell has again been affected by avian malaria in its Humboldt Penguin colony. The colony was badly affected in 1999 and again this



Young Japanese Serow at Edinburgh - A first UK breeding in June

year when four birds died. It would seem that a long, hot summer is excellent weather for this endemic disease and that moulting birds have lower immunity (all the dead birds were in moult). It is possible to combat the disease and various procedures have been established at the zoo to combat the risk.

Banham

A first UK breeding of the Sri Lankan Leopard was achieved in June 2005 after a gestation period of 96 days. As is usual the female was separated for the birth and it wasn't immediately apparent that two cubs had been born. Banham constructed a new and unique enclosure for the leopards in 2004, the only open-topped leopard enclosure in the country. It has enabled the leopards to have far more space than conventional enclosures permit and the zoo was hopeful that this would provide all the encouragement the leopards would need to reproduce. Only 50 individuals of this subspecies are to be found in European zoos and only two other litters have been born this year.

Bristol

At the end of July the new Monkey Jungle finally opened. It is a squat, rather square building comprising of four tall glass-fronted indoor halls, the public passes through the middle of these. De Brazza's Monkeys have an open-topped exhibit with access to the Gorilla Island via a log. Next to these are Lion-tailed Macaques again in an open-topped enclosure with large viewing windows. Across the way are Black Howler Monkeys with a more traditional but superbly furnished cage. Finally Ring-tailed Lemurs and Red Ruffed Lemurs share an exhibit which becomes a large walk-through area on the outside. It's all nice and solid embodying the feel of the Gorilla quarters just around the corner not surprisingly.

Also new to me (but maybe not that new to others) is the roofing over of the Flamingo Pond to create a free flight walk-through aviary with waterfowl, ibises and the like. I approve of fully-winged waterfowl so it seems like a good move.

Contrary to certain rumours the solitary Little Penguin is still alive although you might be fortun-

nate to see it (normally it is in a burrow towards the rear of the penguin area which backs onto the Fur Seal Enclosure).

Plans for the new zoo at Hollywood Towers look very exciting and can be seen in some detail in the corridor outside the Invertebrate Hall. I was however, surprised to see the proposed Manatees offered as Britain's first ones – they were exhibited at London as long ago as 1875!

Chester

A notable new addition to the collection is a group of three Utila Island Iguanas (*Ctenosaura bakeri*) from the tiny island of Utila off mainland Honduras. This species is severely threatened by tourist developments on the island and no less than five UK collections are working with the species, particularly Jersey Zoo (now known as 'Durrell' apparently). Jersey has been particularly successful with Montserrat Mountain Chicken Frogs and after a period of not being able to give them away it seems that now everyone is interested in this critically endangered amphibian. Four young frogs have just arrived at Chester. Also on show at the zoo now are Asian Bonytongues (*Sclerophages formosus*) and Pla Eesok (*Probarbus jullieni*) the latter are a large, rather colourful, south-east Asian type of barb which I don't remember seeing in aquaria very much. They are housed in an aquarium in the Elephants of the Asian Forest exhibit.

Rhinoceros Hornbills have bred this year at Chester, this is thought to be a UK first and probably a European first. These are the Javan subspecies *Buceros rhinoceros silvestris*. The whole incubation period was visible to the public via a nestbox camera.

Colchester

Brand new for this year is the Komodo Dragon exhibit situated at what might be termed the 'top of the zoo' in the area where the Chimps used to be. Careful planning has gone into this million pound plus exhibit with two young female Komodo Dragons recently arrived from Reptilandia in Gran Canaria as the first inhabitants. Built in the fashion of a timbered Essex barn which is now the architectural style of choice at



The new walk through bat aviary at South Lakes Wild Animal Park opened on 26th July

Colchester the exhibit consists of two large indoors areas with additional holding areas both on and off show, particularly interesting is the ability to retract the roof in suitable weather, a facility which negates the need for a dedicated outdoor enclosure. The roof itself is constructed using a type of plastic which maximises the penetration of UV light. At the moment the lizards are around a metre in length and obviously it is hoped to obtain male specimens before too long.

Colchester is currently building a series of tall aviaries at the rear of the falconry area both for the existing birds and also some additional new species. Like me, the zoo's director, Dominique Tropeano is rather ill at ease with the traditional method of tethering birds of prey. It is fairly well known that these birds are fairly inactive in the wild unless hunting or breeding so this is possibly not a welfare issue although I remain unconvinced on this; after all it is a very cheap way of housing the animals and little removed from the parrot stands of the 19th century in truth. At the moment there are far too many catchpenny falconry centres in this country without much serious intent (apart from commercial gain), methinks a move away from the tethering stand towards aviaries that provide at least a degree of movement and choice for the birds would rather sort the men out from the boys.

Ground has been broken next to Stanway church for the new Orang-utan exhibit scheduled for completion next year. This is just about the only spare space left in the zoo (don't you just love those zoos that are full of animals rather than vast lawns and playgrounds?) and will necessitate going under

the entrance road via a tunnel from the underwater area of the Sea Lion exhibit.

A further condition of the planning consent was that, via English Heritage, the church ruins would be refurbished. Colchester still has two rather aged hybrid Orang-utans and initially it is they that will be housed here together with various small support exhibits.

Dudley

Ever since Dudley Zoo was starkly faced with closure back in 1977 the fortunes of the zoo have rather waxed and waned under a variety of plans for a way forward into the future. Currently there is a large and rather well advanced plan to sell or lease a substantial area at the bottom of the zoo to a developer who will install a retail village orientating towards arts and crafts.

The planned area is between the entrance and the Bingo Hall taking in the Geochrom and the new Chimpanzee Enclosure, therefore also the children's farm and the rather ghastly little fairground, obviously this will release an amount of funding which will go to a number of major projects around the zoo. It is intended that the Chimpanzees will move to a new substantial enclosure encompassing the Ape House and the Orang-utans will move from there to the Lubetkin Polar Bear Terrace, part of which will be roofed over to provide indoor accommodation. The Sumatran Tigers will move to the Lion enclosure and a new area will be created for Asiatic Lions in the fields below the old Tropical Bird House.

After various false starts in the last 25 years or so, I do have the impression that another crossroads has been reached – the Chimpanzee Enclosure will be a loss but the Geochrom is a classic example of architectural intent overturning practical husbandry and has never really worked. Also the area around the zoo has become something of a backwater and if it takes the new leisure pursuit of shopping to bring people in and awaken them to the treasures living up on the hill then so be it.

Dartmoor

The Dartmoor Wildlife Park has new owners but no definite re-opening date. Brother's Duncan and Ben Mee took over in October and it was recently reported that four days after arriving, the Mees, who seemingly have no previous zoo experience, had to cope with an escaped jaguar that had found its way into a nearby tigers' enclosure. It was safely sedated by keepers.

Andover

The only pair of Steller's Sea Eagle in England (Edinburgh in Scotland also has them) are now on show at the Hawk Conservancy Trust in Hampshire. Amazingly the birds are part of a consignment of six seized by Dutch Customs and the conservancy was selected by EAZA to house the birds.

NIRAH

If you are not familiar with this name then NIRAH is the project to establish the world's largest freshwater aquarium on the site of a disused quarry and brickworks in Bedfordshire, rather on the lines of Cornwall's Eden Project only with living animals. At the moment this ambitious project has hit something of a financial wall in terms of taking the project to the stage of acquiring outline planning permission (which will apparently take £3.6 million – a quite amazing figure for a pile of paperwork). Not surprisingly the spoilers have jumped on the bandwagon – a nebulous

organisation by the name of Bedford Animal Action has been formed, in essence these bodies crop up at any place in the country where they want to stick their noses in. Almost invariably these people are not locals - Animal Action anywhere is just a figurehead for the same small group of loudmouthed individuals usually fronted by some local address. It is interesting to observe that, when news of the faltering nature of the project was made public, more letters of support were received in one week than had been sent in complaint for two years.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

USA – Catskill Game Farm

An end of a chapter in the zoo world came about on October 9th 2006 when the Catskill Game Farm closed its doors for the last time. Founded in 1933 by a German immigrant Roland Lindemann the Catskill Game Farm achieved exceptional success in breeding rare ungulates which enabled Lindemann to establish a huge reputation as an animal dealer as well as opening his collection to the public. In its heyday the zoo maintained almost 200 species including many that were then very uncommon in zoos such as Père David's Deer, Przewalski's Horse, Addax and Pygmy Hippopotamus. Following Lindemann's death his daughter Kathie Schulz ran the Game Farm from 1989 onwards. It is probably true to say that with Roland Lindemann's passing and the *vale* of animal dealers in general that the profile of the Catskill Game Farm diminished considerably. Nonetheless the park played a huge part in the history of the North American zoo scene in particular and its passing is a very sad one.

Germany – Berlin

The Zoo Berlin Aquarium has opened five new aquariums for Mediterranean species. Many of the aquaria in this wonderful old-style aquarium now feature zoogeographic themes. Mediterranean fish and invertebrates are becoming increasingly rare in public aquariums. This aquarium has always been one of my favourites maintaining not only a comprehensive collection but also well and accurately identified by signage. The opening of a Sealife Centre in Berlin as direct competition to Zoo Berlin was deplorable as far as I'm concerned given the wide variety of other non-zoological cities that the organisation could have selected from - even if they were exhibiting trained *Coelacanth*s I would not enter their portals.

USA – North Carolina

A new name on the US zoo scene is Sylvan Heights Waterfowl Park and Eco Centre (what a mouthful!) which opened to the public on October 7th. The centre has taken

Les Loups du Gavaudan

By Patrick Wisniewski

The Cévennes in south-east France is not an area renowned for its zoological collections though it is well known to the naturalist for its spectacular scenery, abundance of flowers and, at certain times of the year, excellent bird-watching. The Belvédère des Vautours in the Gorge de le Jonte near Le Rozier offers spectacular viewing of Griffon and Black Vultures as well as other birds of prey and various montane specialities. However, the zoo enthusiast might be more surprised to encounter Pzewalski Horses signposted near to the Chanet glider aerodrome close to the village of Le Villaret on the Causse Méjean. This large herd leads a semi-feral existence i.e. they are fenced in but allowed to roam over a huge area of limestone plateau leading an apparently wild existence. Their behaviour is fascinating to watch and it is good to see these wild horses galloping around unhindered and interacting much as they probably would in a truly wild state.

Perhaps even more surprising is the presence of a wolf park, Les Loups du Gavaudan, near to Sainte-Lucie. In fact, the park has been in existence since 1985 and was the brainchild of Gérard Ménatory who wanted to show wolves living in semi-freedom. The park is divided into a series of 'reserves', huge well-vegetated enclosures which utilise the sloping, rocky site to great advantage.

Each reserve contains wolves of different sub-species. On my visit in September 2005 there were Polish (*Canis l. lupus*), Mongolian (*C.*

l. chanco), Siberian (*C.l. albus*) and an elderly trio of Canadian wolves (*C. l. mackenzii*). The grounds are well laid out, there are regular guided walks and feeds, a well-appointed visitor centre (though typically toilets are at a premium and hard to find) including restaurant, bar, shop and museum and the wooded walks provide views of wild birds including Crested Tits and Honey Buzzards. There is an attractive, full-colour guide-book as well as a six page printout in English.

Most of the original stock originated from zoos though the majority of animals currently in the park were born there. However, in 1991 the park provided a refuge for 80 Mongolian wolves which had been captured and sent to Hungary for the purpose of fur farming. The Brigitte Bardot Foundation intervened and arranged their move to the park. The majority of these are now housed at the 15ha Scientific Observation Park, south of Saint-Lucie, established in 1994 and not open to the public.

Wolves in France were eradicated during the early 1900s with the last killed in 1954. However, they are making a comeback in the Alps though inevitably farming interests are still opposed to their return. The park aims to change opinions so that wolves will eventually be accepted as part of life in the wilder regions of France. They have a long way to go but with 100,000 visitors in some years, modern facilities and such wonderful ambassadors in the shape of the captive wolves one would dare to hope that they may just succeed.

two years to build and already houses 2,500 birds of 170 species. Magellanic Steamer Ducks, African and Indian Pygmy Geese, Freckled Ducks and African White-backed Ducks have been bred here.

Breeding programmes are underway for 17 of the 44 waterfowl species listed as globally threatened by Birdlife International. Various other birds are featured in six aviaries representing different continents.

The focus on conservation and education led the North Carolina Zoological Society to enter into partnership with Sylvan Heights to begin planning the new park.

Afghanistan – Kabul

I don't know about you but until the last year or so I was under the impression that the situation in Afghanistan was largely under control. Now it seems that full scale war is underway once more. A famous victim of the Taliban and the subsequent war was Kabul Zoo. As is well known some restoration of the zoo has taken place headed by the North Carolina Zoo which acts in an advisory manner and has been instrumental in fundraising for the zoo.

Zoo's Print reveals that standards have been maintained at the zoo following the measures of the last few years and that the zoo currently maintains a small aquarium (under separate ownership from the municipality which runs the zoo). Four Asiatic Black Bears and two Brown Bears are kept - all of which managed to scale the moat and temporarily escape a short while ago! The Wolves are proving problematic due to the

BORN FREE

A current campaign is focusing on conditions in Spanish Zoos and the Born Free Foundation is part of an umbrella group known as Info Zoo which is investigating this. So far some seven fairly obscure Spanish zoos have been inspected by Info Zoo and found to be lacking in many respects. Much as I oppose the BFF in principal it would rather appear that this

is a needed campaign. Spain is in rather a strange place zoowise at the moment and after many years of being largely forgettable apart from Madrid and Barcelona now has some world class places such as Fuengirola and Loro Parque. The new zoo being built at Valencia promises to be of that quality too. That said, the poor reputation of the Mediterranean countries

with captive wild animals in the past is still rather too easily found and whereas in Northern Europe inadequate zoos are a thing of the past there are still plenty of them elsewhere including Spain. This is exactly the kind of thing BFF should be doing instead of moaning about London Zoo or opposing planning permission for exciting new developments at Chessington.

number of births and the pack now numbers 12 animals. Amazingly the zoo has constructed a fragile Elephant House in order to accommodate its most desired acquisition – which it does not yet have and is under considerable pressure not to have!

Hungary – Budapest

Restoration work has begun on the zoo's famous Great Rock. The reconstruction of the near 100 year old cement artificial rock is expected to be complete by September 2007.

USA – Georgia Aquarium, Atlanta

Two more Whale Sharks have been added to the Georgia Aquarium's Ocean Voyager exhibit which is the largest single aquarium tank in the

world holding 6.2 million gallons of seawater at a depth of some 33 feet. Alice, who measures 13 feet 10 inches and Trixie who is 15 feet 5 inches long have joined Ralph and Norton to make up a group of four. They were flown from Taipei, Taiwan in a specially configured B747 air freighter. The 500,000 square foot facility is designed to house six Whale Sharks ultimately.

USA – Zoo Atlanta

Nine-year-old Giant Panda Lun Lun gave birth on September 6th to the fifth giant panda born in the US. The female cub will not be on view for 100 days. Until then, panda fans have been keeping up with the cub's progress on the zoo's online panda cam. Visit www.zooatlanta.org and follow the links.

Book review

By Tim Brown

Lubetkin's Legacy

By C.H. Keeling
Clam Publications

I've long wanted to write about Clin and Pam Keeling's publications as they represent some of the most specialist and esoteric in zoo literature. Amazingly this is their 33rd release (not even counting a handful of books for children). The books have a homespun appearance with pages consisting of typewritten duplicated sheets held in a simple binder. Photographs are of photocopy quality but you can forget all of that because author Clin Keeling's writing is wonderfully idiosyncratic – he is a skilled and knowledgeable zoologist who has heavily researched the much-ignored field of zoo history and based Clam Publications around the subject. His writing style is hugely personalised and warm, his occasional pomposity is entertaining, even if it makes this reviewer rather less forgiving of his errors than I might otherwise be.

Amongst his many works are some of the very few written references to the Hull and Cheltenham Zoological Gardens. Even better in some ways are the various defunct 60s and 70s collections that the author had first-hand experience of. We should all be grateful that he committed these experiences to paper.

Manchester's Belle Vue Zoo is probably his greatest passion and there are no less than three books devoted to the subject. Keeling's volume on his own long-gone Ashover Zoological Garden is a remarkably self-effacing look back at the author's own life. It is highly personal and all the better for that. In its own way it stands out amongst zoo publications.

The most recent publication is 'Lubetkin's Legacy' – an affectionate look at Dudley Zoo and the second time that the author has written a book about this particular subject. It is a welcome return to form. I use that phrase because I had become a little concerned about a certain formularisation in some recent Clam volumes. Whereas it is always interesting to hear Clin offer his opinion on any zoological subject, the long repetitive stock lists and relatively minor events at places as vital as Bristol and Chessington made for rather tedious

reading in large parts of previous works. 'Lubetkin's Legacy' is much more varied and peppered with the author's memories, which are compared with the Dudley Zoo of today – this is Keeling at his best, using his knowledge and experience, passing his idiosyncrasies down as-it-were. Given that the author has more than a soft spot for the old circus beastwagons (and he is certainly in a minority there) surprisingly the Dudley of today largely meets with his approval, due, I feel, to a personal bias based on nostalgia (nothing wrong with that, as it makes for interesting reading). Personally I would like to see the author doing more of this kind of thing, but alas, age and an admitted aversion to travelling means we have to settle for occasional works of this kind.

Beyond the various asides and contentious comments are some very solid pieces of zoo information. For instance, details of Dudley's elephants or a first UK breeding for the Nile Crocodile. Keeling is absolutely spot-on in his assessment of the state of Dudley's Tropical House or Geochrom as it is known. Information on Dudley Zoo's almost-forgotten aquarium and the old Bear Ravine make for an essential addition to any zoo library. There are bits and pieces of Keelingsque that I would take issue with – in the most friendly manner of course. One chapter 'Landlocked Sea Mammals' is particularly flawed, the author speculates on the predicament of Dudley's Killer Whale and the accommodation for the Southern Elephant Seals (of which Dudley brought in no less than nine specimens at once). Those of you with issue 8 of Zoo! will see the whole situation regarding Cuddles the Killer Whale explained. As for the Elephant Seals – well one or two may have ended up in the current sealion enclosure but basically they were kept where the penguins currently are. There is no mention of Dudley's dolphins either. This is but a small flaw however, in the gem that is 'Lubetkin's Legacy'.

As I stated previously this is Clam Publication's best release for some time, if you have other books of theirs you will need this, if you never sampled their wares then this is an ideal up-to-date point at which to start. Contact CH Keeling at 13 Pound Place, Shalford, Guildford, Surrey GU4 8HH.

OBITUARIES

FRANK WHEELER (1949 - 2006)

In British zookeeping circles Frank Wheeler was something of a legend and his death on August 18th is a great loss. Few keepers of mammals will have ever encountered more species than Frank in his years at the Clore Pavilion in London Zoo (see issue No. 8 of Zoo! for a complete listing of species in the Clore compiled with Frank's help). His real love was otters but it wouldn't take long before he would talk of Elephant Shrews or Koalas (nominated by Frank as the one species he would have liked back at the Clore). Frank Wheeler started as a keeper at London Zoo back in 1966 as a school leaver. He was proud of the fact that in his earliest days at the zoo he worked under a keeper who had actually worked with Thylacines. As much as anything the latter fact illustrates that Frank Wheeler represented the end of the keeping era when the Clore Pavilion was actually still built to house a taxonomic representation. It is ironic that his last days would see the Clore undergo a change almost entirely at odds with the old days of species inventories. I don't know whether he approved of the changes or not but I am sure that he embraced all the latest developments in the zoo world adding them to his vast experience creating the consummate zookeeper and a vital cog in the history of the Z.S.L.

STEVE IRWIN (1962 - 2006)

There will not be a reader of this publication who is not familiar with the tragic death of Steve Irwin on September 4th. It is a major loss to the whole cause of wildlife. Of course he was most famous as a television presenter with his Crocodile Hunter programme and there are many in zoological circles who were ill at ease with his larger-than-life style of presentation. I take the view however, that he was responsible for creating a huge interest in wildlife amongst ordinary television viewers and we can ask no more of his skills than that. He was of course also the owner of Australia Zoo in Beerwah as well, thus considerably furthering the cause of animals in captivity. From all accounts (ones I value) his zoo was a very good one. Very rarely do zoomen receive a tribute from a Prime Minister and the offer of a state funeral. Such was his magnitude.

It Began with a Ruhr (with apologies to San Diego!)

By Tim Brown

Quite rightly Germany is famous amongst zoo enthusiasts for its zoo culture - Hagenbeck's Hamburg Zoo shaped the zoos of today from almost 100 years ago, Berlin is the greatest zoo city in the world, Walsrode has the finest bird collection and so on. One area of Germany has a particularly high concentration of zoos and that is the Ruhr Valley and its surrounding regions. Indeed, one does not have to venture too far to the north of the Ruhr to find another rash of zoos sitting almost shoulder to shoulder and served by superb public transport facilities. At the height of summer and in the midst of a heatwave of tropical proportions I was able to revisit the Ruhr for the first time in eight years and also make visits to some zoos to the north for the very first time. I thought it would be interesting to record some relatively brief observations and conclusions.



Melanistic Jaguar at Krefeld

DUISBURG. As reported in the last edition of *Zoo Grapevine* the newest innovation at Duisburg is the Rio Negro House, a South American-themed tropical house which provides a new home for the zoo's famous Amazon River Dolphins. To be honest, anything had to be an improvement on their old tank in the aquarium and this tank is much larger with the capability of dividing into two. The only disadvantage is that the curvature of the glass can distort the view a little and it takes the dolphins breaking the water's surface to appreciate how pink they are in colouration. A further addition to this house but not a part of it is at one corner of the house where a series of rocky enclosures are being created for Eurasian species of tortoise in an open semi-desert fashion. Two heavily planted small forest areas with a Madagascan theme have been added at Duisburg since my last visit, one of these is for free-ranging Ring-tailed Lemurs, the other contains a number of glass fronted enclosures for Fossas. Duisburg has long been a centre of Fossa breeding under some very modest conditions so it is nice to see a proper response to their success.

The dark and dank Monkey House has had something of a makeover and been 'naturalised' with bark chippings, cages have been enlarged by knocking into each other with a significant outdoor area for Goril-

las. I'm sure the Gorilla area is in place of the old Gelada enclosure so where exactly the Geladas go outdoors now I'm not certain at all.

As with most other zoos the specialties and idiosyncrasies species-wise are slowly withering on the vine - only one Giant Otter remains; according to I.S.I.S. there is still a Bush Pig in the collection but try as I might I couldn't see it (and they do look a great deal different to Red River Hogs) and in common with a worrying trend even in German Zoos the Polar Bears have gone. The Belugas have died and the remaining Commerson's Dolphin has been shipped out to Sea World in San Diego with their old area being converted to additional space for the Bottlenosed Dolphins. One nice touch is the addition of a zoo museum in the house of a former monkey island and complete with a walk-in cage. Lots of information and even though I don't read German there was a great deal that I could understand. Sadly I seemed to be the only visitor making much effort to look and learn.

KREFELD. Krefeld is just to the west of Duisburg by about 20 kilometres. The zoo is smaller than its near neighbour and in truth probably shouldn't have some of the larger species it has but in the same way that our zoos think they shouldn't have some of the big stuff then the German zoos think they should... hence elephants and rhinos at Krefeld. The zoo also occupies the area adjacent to one side and one end of the local soccer stadium which is an unusual circumstance of which much would be made in the British press, probably of an unflattering nature to both parties.

The big addition since my last visit has been an Amazonian-themed Tropical House in a tall cylindrical style something akin to a glass oast house. It works very well and is packed with interesting species although mammals and reptiles seem to predominate rather than birds. This might be because of the free-ranging White-faced Sakis but I could be wrong. If you are fortunate you may get a diurnal view of the Long-tongued Bats (*Glossophaga soricina*) fluttering around a feeding station (they are nectivorous), failing ►

Male Nyala at Duisburg



◀ that you will see them in their glass fronted 'cave'. Southern Tamanduas share an enclosure with Bare-tailed Woolly Opposums (no marks for guessing which species couldn't be seen). Smooth-fronted Caimans breed here and share an enclosure with some huge Arrau Turtles.

Another 'new' area (to me) was the enclosures for Sumatran Tigers and Jaguars, the latter being a typically Germanic tribute to architectural design which would fit into Chester's Jaguar exhibit at least five times I would say. The Mountain Anoa's are still here and breeding but I was once reliably informed not to be too dependent on their specific status. Finally if you do visit the zoo pay attention to their rather unglamorous but totally brilliant Black and White Colobus cage, I'll bet they didn't use an architect for this one either!

COLOGNE. There were two major exhibits to check upon here since my last visit. The Asian Tropical House is now quite old hat but I hadn't seen it before, it is all very nice but actually a tad smaller than I had expected. Lar Gibbons, Great Indian Hornbills and Asian Small-clawed otters were amongst the expected inhabitants, Matschie's Tree Kangaroos and a Fawn-breasted Bowerbird that had built a bower were much more of a surprise. Onto Cologne's enormous new Elephant House and truly one is greeted by a building of airport proportions for the group of eight Asian Elephants. It is one of the few zoo buildings I have ever encountered where the general public lingers to take it all in even when the animals are outside. In an age when new, softer substrates are all the rage in elephant houses I was surprised to see this aspect ignored but it wouldn't be too difficult to add at a later point I would have thought.

Cologne Zoo has always had its zoo rarities but the White Uakaris are now no more, as is the hybrid Bearded Saki. The famed Saigas are down to one male but half a dozen Little Penguins have been added in the area of the Oceanarium once allocated to King Penguins and they can be very easily seen too. The 1.3 Douc Langurs are now in the excellent Ape House with their old accommodation given over entirely to Lemurs including the exceedingly rare Greater Bam-

'It is one of the few zoo buildings I have ever encountered where the general public lingers to take it all in'

The enormous new Elephant House at Cologne



boo Lemur which has recently bred here. This is a quite superb zoo that I rated considerably higher than on my last visit, it was not difficult to spend a whole day there.

DORTMUND. A charming medium-sized zoo situated within a public park thus making access somewhat more long-winded than is normally the case in Germany. For instance at Cologne I arrived at the main railway station (opposite the famous cathedral) descended one floor, whereupon I had to wait a whole four minutes for an underground train to whisk me to the zoo's own station. If had I missed that train then I would have had a whole seven minutes to wait for another one! Dortmund is a municipal zoo and many German zoos are still of this type, even if they are owned by a different mechanism they can still rely on financial support from either city or state. For this reason commercialism is frequently at a minimum and at Dortmund the zoo is markedly untainted by banners, billboards and signage. The zoo oozes a quiet confidence born of its municipal security. It is particularly famous for breeding Giant Anteaters and Tamanduas.

Again, this was not my first visit but it was four years since I had strolled the zoo's many leafy glades. Not surprisingly therefore changes were not great although the major addition is a combined Orangutan and Malayan Tapir exhibit which looks very nice outdoors but has really odd indoor quarters full of hanging wire partitions and a most unattractive cushion flooring which looks just like schoolyard tarmac. I couldn't take to it at all. The Tropical House is very nice, situated on the side of a hill, the visitor descends through three levels and the greenhouse-styled building has a lovely damp earthy feel to it. A real scent of the tropics although the theme here is specifically Asia, in fact it has all the realism that the new Orang House currently lacks.

HANOVER. The makeover of the Hanover Zoo has been one of the big stories of the German zoo scene in the last ten years or so. In fact it is 11 years since the master plan to convert the zoo into an 'Erlebnis-Zoo' ('adventure zoo') was first put into motion with the general overall concept being to build an immersion zoo without discernable houses and barriers. To be honest I'm somewhat reminded of Vincennes in Paris and it doesn't seem as if the two zoos are 60 years apart. When I last visited Hanover in 1998 the project was necessarily piecemeal, now that many of the areas have been interlinked with likeminded exhibitory and much more work completed I am bound to say I was impressed. Hippos in a crystal clear pool with underwater viewing and Black Rhinos in a dusty clearing are bound to be huge improvements on their old tiled 'bathrooms'. I was especially impressed with an African Plains exhibit which eschews a lawn approach in favour of a more barren semi-desert effect for its Cape Hartebeest, Impala, Thomson's Gazelle, Common Eland and Grant's Zebras. Very realistic. Occasionally Hanover oversteps the mark a little and the Asian area based upon a ruined temple wanders dangerously close to theme park culture, nor is it a million miles away from the ethnically-styled zoo buildings of the 19th century. Four areas have been created thus far; - Zambezi River (basically an African area but it does have an automated boat ride), Jungle Palace (Asian), Gorilla Mountain (apes) and Meyer's Farm (children's farm meets playground). Yet to come

is Yukon Bay which to quote the zoo is 'the solution to the problem of the old Polar Bear section and penguin enclosures which are not good enough for the animals and also ecologically and economically unsustainable'. Well not much argument there, as all the above mentioned exhibits are examples of 50s/60s modernism now overtaken by time. The more observant amongst you might notice that there are penguins in the Yukon Bay! Back over to the zoo itself then - 'further along the dock lies a floundered ship. A resourceful penguin enthusiast has seized this opportunity to build "the northernmost penguin zoo" on the stranded vessel. The penguins have taken over the entire ship, hopping from deck to deck and swimming in the waterlogged hull'. So there you have it - possibly the most drawn-out, over-elaborated reasoning for the logistical problems of zoo-geographic theming that I have ever come across! Other animals to be included in this 22 million euro exhibit include Arctic Foxes, Wolves and Caribou.

Around the periphery of the new zoo are various remnants of the old traditional Hanover Zoo and most of these are more than acceptable, they include the famous ungulate paddocks with their tiny ditches as barriers introduced by one-time zoo director Dr Lothar Dittrich based on the principle that the enclosures represent the animal's home territory and that they will not want to leave or 'escape'. Ultimately I have to conclude that although the Colognes and Duisburgs with their traditional zoological gardens are more to my style the new Hanover is a huge improvement on the old. They have started a trend in Germany (as we shall see next) and I must admit, it's not one I'd like to see universally adopted. It is an extension of Hagenbeckism pure and simple but give me Berlin and its diversity of species and housing any day of the week!

GELSENKIRCHEN. I last visited this zoo some four years ago, quite frankly amongst the zoos of the Ruhr it struck me as the most dispensable that I had seen. An ancient Monkey House and a dark cave of an Elephant House (including Hippos) would have been roundly condemned in Britain 20 years ago. However, the German trend is not to give up and close zoos down but to turn a negative situation into a positive one. That this is achieved using public funding is one of the ironies and differences between the UK and Germany to which I constantly return. Gelsenkirchen has decided, via 86 million euros of state funding, to totally reinvent itself in the manner of Hanover. It is now therefore officially known as Erlebniswelt Gelsenkirchen. This is ironic given that both zoos were once part of a long established history of zoo dealerships, in this case the famed Ruhe family of animal dealers.

The Gelsenkirchen Zoo of the future will basically comprise of three areas: the Asian area is yet to be started upon and it is in this area that elements of the old zoo still exist although off-show to the general public. The African area was open to the public in mid July much to my surprise as it was less than half ready, a mixed plains exhibit of ungulates was complete as was a hyena exhibit that was actually built upon the occasion of my last visit, a few Lesser Flamingos had been placed on an embryonic island in the middle of a large waterway on which the almost compulsory boat ride was now underway. In addition, a Tropical House has been built in this area mainly to house a



The new Tropical House at Gelsenkirchen

Chimpanzee colony. This means that the visitor to Gelsenkirchen in 2006 has basically only the Alaska World region of the zoo to visit in a completed state, however, this is a fascinating area and worth the admission price on its own as we shall see.

Alaska World is a very interesting development accessed by a shop in ethnic style complete with totem poles. One cannot fail to be impressed with the size of the enclosures and much use is made of water including an artificial fastwater stream that is almost a river so large is it. Many of the moats around the enclosures are further secured by barriers of artificial reeds made of steel, further enhanced by an electric fence. When overgrown by real reeds this security measure will be virtually indistinguishable.

Huge enclosures can be found for Kodiak Bears (3,000 square metres), Polar Bears, Moose (2,700 square metres), Wolves and Californian Sealions, some situated amongst artificial rockwork of montane proportions. The old geographical conundrums are well illustrated here, most obviously with regard to the Californian Sealions, which aren't found anywhere near Alaska - other less obvious conundrums abound, European Lynx, European Moose, the Wolves are probably 'zoo Wolves (although a nice jet black pack). I'm sure education is part of the 'adventure zoo' concept and whilst the Moose and Lynx are but a white lie then the Californian Sealions amount to something of a confidence trick.

Other species to be seen include Raccoons, Canadian Otters, Snowy Owls, Tree Porcupines and Canadian Beavers. It is reckoned that the whole zoo will be completed by 2008 but already Gelsenkirchen must take care. I'm not too sure that all the imitation rockwork will take the strain and some areas already need repair. The dry moat in front of the Sealion pool (so typical of German zoo design) was full of fast food wrappers and other commercial detritus. It was as if things were already out of control a little, as if the zoo had bitten off more than it could chew so to speak. Given that this zoo stands on the very precipice of theme park culture great care must be taken not to go over the edge - the Alaskan 'Village' in the middle of all this is perilously garish, tainted by wear it could become an anachronism rather than the much touted brave new zoo.

Continued overleaf ►

'This means that the visitor to Gelsenkirchen in 2006 has basically only the Alaska World region of the zoo to visit in a completed state'

ZOO Grapevine

◀ **WALSRODE.** My first visit to this fabulous place in eight years, much has been made of the changes of ownership but as far as I'm concerned it was 'business as usual' on my recent visit. This is still the world's best avian collection with numerous specialities to be seen nowhere else in captivity. A large Tropical House was under construction when I was last here and obviously it was all completed now. It's a fairly simple construction - a large glasshouse in effect but heavily planted with a few individual aviaries sprinkled around and even a few mammals such as Goodfellow's Tree Kangaroos. The house is based on Indonesia which gives scope to extend into New Guinea via Irian Jaya. Red-bellied Kookaburra (*Dacelo gaudichaud*) was a notable 'first' for me in here, a smaller species but fabulously bright with its brick-coloured breast.

In recent times Walsrode has specialised in Madagascan birds, as a result I observed such wonders as Sickie-billed Vangas, Long-tailed Ground Rollers, Madagascan Blue Pigeons and Crested, Blue and Giant Couas. Other casual observations included the first One-wattled Cassowary I've seen in ages, male Andean Cock-o'-the-rocks displaying to one another from adjoining cages and the first Horned Guans I'd ever encountered. A 'must' for any zoo enthusiast I would say.

RHEINE. Although this was my first visit I felt like I already knew this zoo quite well as it is frequently mentioned in International Zoo News. I suppose that because of this, I thought that it would be a little larger than it is. I shouldn't sound critical however, because this is still an excellent and innovative small zoo with a great deal to commend it. I'm informed that the main reason behind this is zoo director Joachim Achim. He has made much of some quite ordinary cages and enclosures, the result is some beautifully planted aviaries and water-barrier viewing for the Lemur cages. As with all the governmentally supported German zoos (either city or state and most seem to get some public money at least) there is a refreshing lack of commercialism. We all know that UK zoos have to take their money where they find it (and may ultimately be stronger for that heavy dose of realism) but it is quite nice to see the signage devoted to animals and animals alone save for an occasional pointer to visitor facilities.

I suppose Naturzoo Rheine (to give it its full and proper title) is best known for its Geladas of which there are two groups totalling over 30 animals. The zoo has been breeding this species since 1983 and quite a number have been sent to other zoos even as far as the Bronx Zoo in New York. They occupy large moated enclosures with public access also to their indoor accommodation via plated glass windows. Not many zoos

make a big play on attracting wild species (Salzburg and its Griffon Vultures comes immediately to mind) but Rheine is as famous for its White Storks as its Geladas and a water meadow on the edge of the zoo held at least 50 birds. I don't know, but I would have thought that a few birds at least were clipped and permanently captive although most are clearly not restrained.

Lots of other bits and pieces are interesting without being breathtaking - a smallish walk-through forest for Barbary Macaques, a penguin aviary with Humboldt Penguins and just a couple of Inca Terns accounting for the roofing-over, some lovely Sitatungas and also Sumatran Tigers. Clearly this is a zoo which recognises its local function and knows its limitations. I enjoyed an excellent lunch in a large, new restaurant confirming that virtually all German zoos offer much better eating facilities in terms of both quality and value than most of their UK counterparts.

MUNSTER. Here at last is a German zoo that I can relate to in terms of a UK equivalent. That equivalent is Blackpool Zoo which was built at around the same time in the early 70s. In the case of Munster, the zoo replaced the original zoo started in 1875, the site of which is now occupied by the headquarters of a financial institution. Both Blackpool and Munster have a similar functional concrete appearance and both are currently working hard to lessen this effect. Particularly outstanding in this respect are the new outdoor facilities at Munster for Chimpanzees and Gorillas which link to a walk-through area for Black and White Colobus. Bornean Orang-utans also fare well at Munster as might be expected from accommodation that is only seven years old.

Of course the full name of the zoo adds the term 'Allwetterzoo' (Allweatherzoo) referring to the number of indoor exhibits and the covered walkways connecting many of them. In truth this is perhaps an overstated aspect and I'm sure that on a rainy day the unprepared visitor would not manage to avoid adverse conditions. One unusual exhibit is the indoor accommodation for the Syrian Bears which shows the carnivores behind glass, not unique I will admit, but unusual enough to take me by surprise. Nearby is BioCity, a new 1.7 million euro building which houses variously a museum of biodiversity, a schoolroom and a centre for turtle conservation. The committed zoo enthusiast will also take note of Europe's only Tucuxi (no I didn't know that *Sotalia fluviatilis* or the Estuarine Dolphin was known as that either). The remaining male, Paco, is over 30 years old and shares the Dolphinarium at Munster with two Bottlenosed Dolphins which, to be honest, he rather resembles. The commitment to larger zoo animals such as Indian Elephants,

White Rhinos and Reticulated Giraffes is very much part of an ideal which saw the Allwetterzoo resist proposed downscaling a few years ago - an idea put forward by the local council. Indeed, in typical Germanic manner the whole proposal was turned around into an investment for a better zoo. I began by comparing this zoo with Blackpool and indeed there are many parallels but the way the zoo has been treated by local authorities and cherished by the local populace is entirely different.

OSNABRUCK. The weather in Germany during my July visit was oppressively hot; it certainly did not lend itself to patience with a whole host of circumstances. Even I found myself wanting to leave some zoos in order to locate air-conditioned bars or shops and it may be the reason why I was a little underwhelmed by Osnabruck Zoo.

It struck me that this medium-sized zoo really was a mishmash of architectural styles which ends up in a significant loss of identity. Some of the zoo mirrors the 70s modernism of its neighbour Munster, in other areas a series of small glass houses for animals reminded me of the zoo at Liberec in the Czech Republic. The newish Lion House is a cathedral-styled palace for the King of the Beasts.

As with every other zoo on my trip a major new exhibit had been opened, on this occasion a dusty, dry African Savannah enclosure with Giraffes, Ostrich, zebra etc. But there was nothing which really caught my imagination, nothing which stuck in the mind, nothing that really made me want to return. I know I'm being a little unfair but three hours really was enough, maybe on a sunny October weekday it would have been different.

CONCLUSION. Much has been made of the dilemmas facing the German zoo world given that most establishments in that country are publicly subsidised to a lesser or greater extent. People I know in the zoo fraternity over there have been complaining about cutbacks in funding for a few years now, but the zoos of the old East are positively awash with new developments and two trips to Germany this year have proven that zoos in the more affluent West are still models of well-ordered zookeeping with lots of new things there too.

The necessary curse of collection planning is eroding species inventories but even German zoos must fall in line with protocol and there are still lots of lovely specialities at the likes of Cologne, the Berlins, Walsrode and others. By virtue of its size the USA will always have the most zoos. We in Britain are still innovative and influential. Holland is zoo crazy but I would still take Germany every time as the number one destination for the zoo enthusiast.