

Progress in Aviculture by The Wildfowl Trust during 1988

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1988 was a comparatively quiet breeding season, with 1422 birds being reared at five Centres. Of the 177 species and subspecies of wildfowl and flamingos held by The Wildfowl Trust, 129 laid eggs and young of 121 were reared.

A pair of Blue Ducks *Hymenolaimus malacorhynchos* at Arundel, imported in 1986 from the New Zealand National Wildlife Centre at Mount Bruce, bred for the first time and one duckling was reared – fortunately a female as Arundel also held an unpaired male. This is the first time that this duck has bred outside New Zealand.

Eight Magpie Geese *Anseranas semipalmata* were reared (at Slimbridge) and six species of whistling ducks *Dendrocygna* bred. Bewick's *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* were the only swans to have no success. Many geese were raised including 59 Nene *Branta sandvicensis* and four Light-bellied Brent *B. bernicla hrota*, but the sheldgeese had a poor season. Some of the teal and shoveler were reluctant to breed: however, 15 South Georgian Pintail *Anas georgica georgica* were reared and a good variety of the larger dabbling ducks. All the pochard types in the collections bred (except the Southern) though some in small numbers. Some perching ducks failed, but eight White-winged Wood Duck *Cairina scutulata* were reared and one South American Comb Duck *Sarkidiornis melanotos carunculatus* at Peakirk. Three Long-tailed Ducks *Clangula hyemalis* were reared at Arundel and varying numbers of most saw-bills and stiff-tails.

Among the flamingos, the Caribbean *Phoenicopterus r. ruber* and Greater *P. r. roseus* flocks at Slimbridge had good numbers of young (nine and eight respectively) but the Andean *Phoenicoparrus andinus* failed to lay, as did the Chileans *P. chilensis* at Peakirk. The large Chilean flock at Slimbridge produced only three young, and



the flock of 43 captive-bred Chilean Flamingos established at Martin Mere in 1976 laid for the first time. At least 56 eggs appeared (two females laid five eggs during the season) but only four chicks hatched. As the birds failed to rear three of these, the fourth was taken in for hand-rearing at eight days old and grew successfully. A Caribbean Flamingo was also hand-reared at Slimbridge after hatching in an incubator, the first flamingo to be reared totally artificially by The Trust. Both these chicks were fed on a crop milk substitute produced by Special Diet Services Ltd based on an analysis of Greater Flamingo crop milk. They were reared with few problems, but three incubator-hatched Chileans, started on the same diet, died at a young age.

A Sparkling Violet-eared Humming Bird *Colibri coruscans*, hatched in the Slimbridge tropical house, was also hand-reared on fruit-flies and nectar substitute.

Work on mortality and diseases of captive birds was aided by the construction of a new animal health laboratory at Slimbridge, including updated diagnostic and *post mortem* facilities. The major cause of mortality among adult birds was, as in all recent years, avian tuberculosis. A joint research project with the University College and Middlesex School of Medicine to develop a vaccine against the disease in wildfowl entered its third year (see the previous report). Progress has been made and in 1988, 50% of the young birds reared at Slimbridge were vaccinated, a process that will be repeated to test the efficacy of the vaccine. Duck virus enteritis also remained a difficulty: outbreaks were prevented or controlled by vaccination, though one batch of vaccine did itself cause some mortality.

An investigation into the effectiveness of mebendazole in controlling certain endoparasites was started in conjunction with

Janssen Pharmaceutical Ltd and Bristol University, while University College Cardiff began a study of development problems in the leg bones of young flamingos.

A two-day course on wildfowl aviculture was held in March, and a one-day seminar on flamingos in July.

Species lost from the collections through death were Musk Duck *Biziura lobata* (the

single male that died had arrived as an adult in 1974) and Hartlaub's Duck *Cairina hartlaubii*. The Trust's small stocks of Crested Screamer *Chauna torquata* and the nominate race of Spur-winged Goose *Plectropterus g. gambensis* were placed elsewhere on breeding loan.

At the end of 1988, The Wildfowl Trust held 6598 captive birds.

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