



Cotswold Wildlife Park Newsletter 2024

WILD TALK



New Additions to the Crash HENRY AND SUSIE

Not one but two rhino births to celebrate and at just 7 days apart, our closest calves yet

Wild Talk is our annual newsletter featuring articles written by the staff here at the Park providing first-hand accounts of births, new animals and exciting Park developments

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Written by
Liam Klingsick

Large Mammal Keeper

The births of Henry and Susie mean we have had an incredible 11 calves born in 11 years!

WELCOME TO THE CRASH

This August we welcomed two very special animals to the Park. After a long gestation of between 16-18 months our two breeding Southern White Rhinoceros females, Nancy and Ruby, gave birth just a week apart from one another. Ruby was right on cue when she gave birth on 12th August, when after 18 months of waiting Henry was born. Henry is Ruby's fifth calf and is by far the most confident calf we have had at the Park. Susie was born to mother Nancy just 7 days later, on 19th August. Initially we were expecting Nancy to give birth a little later in the year, so we had to act quickly when Nancy started showing us the signs

that she was not too far away from giving birth. In preparation for a new calf being born we needed to 'deep litter' the rhino stalls. This means gradually filling the female's house with a thick layer of bark, straw and hay to give them a comfortable place to give birth. Both births were smooth, as we expected with two experienced mothers. The births of Henry and Susie mean we have had an incredible 11 calves born in 11 years!

From the start, Henry was very curious of everything around him and quickly began interacting with his keepers. His confidence was



HENRY

Finding his feet at just a few days old



PLAYTIME

The two calves playing in the paddock

© Paul Nicholas Photography

a bit of a surprise for everyone at first as the calves are usually a little nervous of the world around them and rely on their mum to show them the way. With Henry we were able to give him a scratch under the chin and behind the ear after just 2 days, this normally takes at least a couple of weeks. Over the last few months his confidence has grown further, and he loves nothing more than charging around the large paddock, playing with Susie and rolling in the mud wallows with Ruby. He has been equally confident when out in the paddock with his father Monty. Henry is often observed charging over to see dad, Monty, leaving mum to have a rare minute alone while grazing.

Susie has been a little more reserved and has taken a bit more time to interact with the keepers. Susie took a couple of weeks before she had enough confidence to come over to the keepers for a scratch. She now loves a tickle behind her ears and under her chin. She, like Henry, has loved spending time out in the paddock and is often seen charging around with Henry, rolling in the mud as well as practicing their sparring skills together. In the last few weeks, Susie's confidence has gone through the roof. She has

almost gone past Henry now and is usually the first rhino in the house to come over and ask for some attention.

Having two young calves at the same age has been an amazing experience for the keepers and it has been incredible to see them grow over the last few months. Both have grown into confident characters and have caused plenty of mischief when out in the paddock together, particularly when it comes to coming back into the house at the end of the day. Henry quite often has caused some stressful moments, particularly when he decides to wait for dad to come over to the yard before deciding to come in at the last second, occasionally causing a bit of argument between Ruby and Monty (thanks Henry).

Seeing both charging around the paddock with both adult females on their first day outside was an incredible moment and was certainly one of the highlights of my time at the Park. It has been an absolute pleasure to work with both youngsters and we can't wait to see how both Henry and Susie develop over the coming years.





WELCOME HOME
Kanha relaxing in her
new house

NEW LION HOUSE

Written by
James Welch
Carnivore Keeper

After a year in the making, our Asiatic Lions Rana and Kanha have finally been enjoying their brand-new indoor facility. This new area includes a large on-show communal space, which is larger than the whole of the old house, as well as two private dens and an outside holding area. Lions are incredibly social but they like their own personal space from time to time, Rana and Kanha are no different and this whole facility has been designed to give the lions the opportunity to have multiple options and increased flexibility.

Their favourite area is definitely the large communal space with its soft bark floor, large platform and big logs to climb and scratch on. They can often be seen resting in here, making the most of this new light and airy inside space while it is wet and windy outside! We have seen lots of positive behaviours between the pair as they have settled into the new house while getting to know all of its new features. As keepers, it really is wonderful to see how comfortable and content they are when inside.

It was also a huge honour to have Professor Amy Dickman, renowned lion scientist, come and officially open our new lion house just before World Lion Day in August and show her around the brand new area and to meet our lions.

This new facility reflects everything that we have learnt about keeping lions at the Park and I couldn't be more pleased about how well the lions have taken to it.



RIBBON CUTTING
The lion house is
officially opened!

FIFTIETH FOAL



Written by
Jenni Maxwell

Senior Keeper and
Enrichment Co-ordinator

This year we were very excited to welcome the 50th zebra foal to be born here at the Park!

On 30th October 2023 we were very excited to welcome the 50th zebra foal to be born here at the Park! Zebras are always a visitor favourite, having lived in numerous exhibits at the Park over the years and been the Wildlife Park's iconic logo for over 40 years.

This foal is our pair's 10th foal together! The previous foals have all moved onto other collections as part of a breeding programme. Bob is our resident stallion, now almost 21 years old. He is known for having a bit of an attitude, stands his ground and doesn't like change but is always reliable when food is around. Stella, our mare, has been Bob's loyal companion for 13 years, she is very steady, doesn't cause any trouble and is always a brilliant mum.

Our new foal is female and has been named Flora. Once born zebra foals are quick to get to their feet, usually only taking around 15 minutes to be up and walking around and are able to run after roughly an hour! She is the first zebra we have had born at this time of the year as they are usually summer breeders so it has its own challenges. She has had her fair share of poor health not long after she was born which has meant we have had to interfere a little bit more than we normally would, but she has come out the other side and doesn't seem to hold a grudge against us! She has been very confident from the day she was born and is quite an independent little lady despite her difficult first few weeks!

FLORA THE FOAL

At just a few hours old staying close to her mum



REARING BLACK STORKS



Written by
Richard Wardle

Deputy Bird Keeper

The chicks quickly developed into little eating machines, with a ferocious appetite, they would lunge at anything that came close to them

In 2023 we incubated and hand-reared eggs from our pair of Black Storks. This proved to be a challenging yet rewarding endeavour, with the species requiring specialist care. Unlike other species of stork, such as the White Storks which the Park does tremendously well with, the Black Storks required a specific set of nutrients and access to UV from the day that they hatched. Our two eggs were joined by two from another collection. We successfully incubated and hatched 4 chicks which the team hand-reared.

To ensure the correct growth of the chicks, they had to be individually weighed at each feed, of which there were 5 – 6 a day. We then used their weight to measure out the correct amount of food. The reason for doing this is to ensure they have



DINNER TIME

A young chick tucking into one of its many feeds



CHICK DEVELOPMENT

From just hatched, to nearly 5 weeks, to 18 weeks old

a steady growth rate. During the early stages of the chicks' life, their bones are soft and malleable. If the chicks are too heavy, when they first attempt to stand it can damage and bend their legs, causing them to grow incorrectly or bent. UV also plays a huge part in this. To mimic their natural environment as close as possible, we provided a UV bulb above the chicks from 4 days old. UV helps the chicks to develop correctly as it aids their bodies to process calcium and develop



WEIGH-IN

A chick getting weighed to help calculate its next meal



strong and healthy bones. In the wild the chicks would be exposed to natural light each time the parents moved off the nest.

The chicks quickly developed into little eating machines, with a ferocious appetite, they would lunge at anything that came close to them, including keeper's hands and even each other! With them eating on average 10% of their bodyweight daily, their size and appetite escalated rapidly. In no time at all, the chicks had developed good muscular growth in their necks and started to eat without any assistance, which made feeding time much quicker. They interacted with one another regularly and enjoyed resting their head on one another's backs in between feeds and in the evening. Feathers started to appear at around 3 weeks of age, and the chicks began to shuffle around on their knees, as another couple of weeks passed we witnessed the chicks' first tentative steps, (a very exciting moment) as they stood for the first time, still unable to walk and with short stumpy legs. We

were able to assess each chick to make sure that the food and nutrient levels were correct, and their legs were developing as they should. Now about the size of a feathery rugby ball, the chicks were observed attempting to catch stray flies and standing up on one leg to rest, something that they will do naturally as an adult.

At 7 weeks old, the storks' bodies had grown to full size, as had their characters. Some of the chicks were bolder than the others and wanted to interact with us rather than eat, or were being fussier at feed times. At this point their feathers began to grow rapidly, and their beaks and legs started to extend. Seemingly overnight they went from fuzzy chicks to juvenile storks. As the last of their downy feathers started to be preened from their body (creating great swirling white clouds as we entered the room!) the storks started to jump around and stretch their newly feathered wings, so they were moved to a large open-air aviary. There, they could begin to practice flying. The bolder chicks took to this straight

away, clumsily flapping a foot off the ground in their first attempt at flight, while others stood begging for food at our feet. They were now able to find food for themselves and very quickly learnt to fine-tune their new skills of being an almost fully grown stork.

After nearly 3 months of intense rearing, it was a fantastic sight to see them all perching on branches as fully fledged juvenile storks, basking in the morning sunlight. Going from the size of a large chicken egg to an impressive metre tall bird. Their beaks and legs remain a brown colour, soon to gain the vibrant red colour of the adult birds. Overall, it was a very rewarding summer. We learnt a lot about the development of this amazing species, and we hope to use the knowledge gained to successfully rear more species in the future.



BIGFOOT
Exploring his new home

NEXT GENERATION



Written by
Jamie Craig

Curator and
General Manager

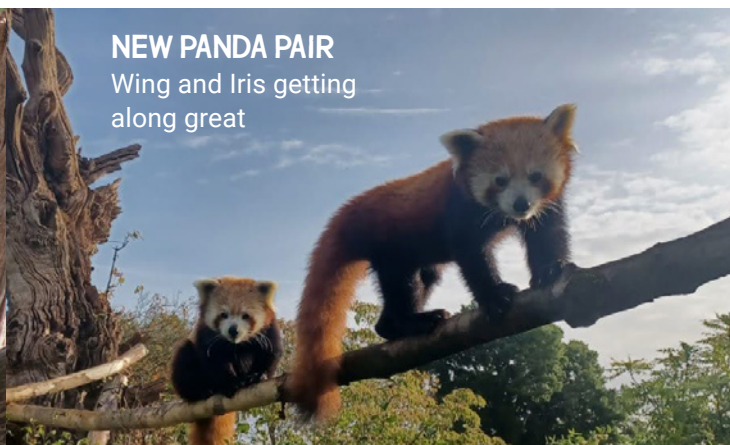
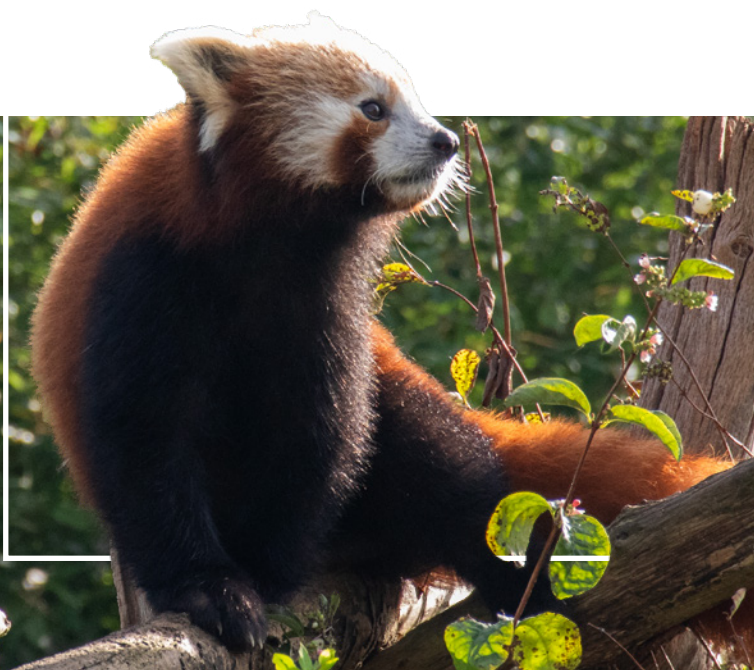
**We eagerly await
the patter of tiny
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clawed feet in the
future**

We have been extremely successful over the years with our breeding record at the Park, but nothing gives us greater satisfaction than watching the next generations develop. This is certainly the case with two of our more notable species at the Park, our Red Pandas and Wolverines.

Our current Red Panda female, Iris, was born in 2021 and is the daughter of our prolific pair Scarlet and Doodoo. She has recently been paired with a young male, Wing, born last year, from Munich Zoo in Germany. The two are now pretty much inseparable, and their very public displays of affection give us real hope they will go on to be as successful as her parents.

Affection is certainly not a word that can be used for the Wolverines. Our original pair, Sarka and Sharapova, were the first Wolverines to breed successfully in the UK and when they finally succumbed to old age, the Park lost two of its most colourful characters.

However, we retained a daughter, Tik, from their final litter in 2018 and she is now joined by Bigfoot, a young male from Chomutov Zoo in the Czech Republic. Although, unlike the Red Pandas, we could never describe wolverine pairs as inseparable (in fact, cantankerous may be more befitting the species), the two are now cohabiting as peacefully as Wolverines can. We eagerly await the patter of tiny but viciously clawed feet in the future – watch this space!



NEW PANDA PAIR
Wing and Iris getting
along great

NOT JUST A PRICKLY FACE



Written by
Hilary Hepburn

Horticulturist

Most of our cacti flowered at some point in the summer of 2023. Many of our cactus specimens have been donated not only by Kew Gardens but also by visitors to the Park, which are always gratefully received

The Arid Beds are located in the Walled Garden by the Meerkats and Penguin exhibits. This year our Cacti have thrived despite the rather cool wet summer and many of our specimens have produced some spectacular flowers.

It's the first time the tall, multi stemmed *Trichocereus pachanoi* (San Pedro Cactus) has produced so many huge white flowers. In the wild these highly fragrant flowers bloom at night where they are pollinated by bats and hawkmoths when it's much cooler in the desert.

The large *Opuntias* (Prickly Pears) were covered in bright orange flowers. The flowers attract bees and other pollinating insects. Once pollinated, the edible fruits form. The fruit can then be eaten raw or made into jam. At the Wildlife Park the flowers and fruits can be fed to some of the reptiles and the Giant Tortoises can even eat the very prickly pads.

The *Myrtillocactus geometrizans* has produced tiny inconspicuous greeny/white flowers which turn into small purple berries, which are also edible.

The cactus collection is housed over winter in our main greenhouse but in mid-May we plant them outside. Cacti come mainly from desert areas in the Americas, they are adapted to endure temperatures ranging from daytime 50C to -20C at night. However, in our wet cold winters they wouldn't survive without protection. So, every autumn the whole collection is dug up before the first frosts and over-wintered in the greenhouse. The Arid beds are then planted with a selection of conifers and unusual spring bulbs.

Trichocereus pachanoi



Opuntias



Myrtillocactus geometrizans





FLAMINGO CHICKS
This year's chicks with the adults

LAKE UPDATE



Written by
Issy Wright

Bird Keeper

The breeding season for the waterfowl always starts early and we had Mandarin, Gadwall and Northern pintail ducklings this year

It has been a great year for the birds on the lake, after we opened again to the public once avian influenza restrictions had been lifted. There are certain species which very much enjoy the public interaction, such as Magpie geese and the Red-breasted geese, pictured below.

The breeding season for the waterfowl always starts early and we had Mandarin, Gadwall and Northern pintail ducklings this year, along with a couple of Red-breasted goslings, which were all hand-reared. As the European Zoo Association's studbook holder for the Red-breasted geese, this was

a highlight for me. The Bar-headed geese also parent-reared a gosling this year, and both parents could be seen being very attentive and protective over their brood!

Much to our relief, the Flamingos began displaying their flamboyant courtship dances and behaviours in April 2023, laying their first egg in June, one month earlier than 2022. After hand-rearing the chicks in 2022, we decided to leave the adults to parent-rear. This is the first time they have parent-reared in 7 years, so we were slightly apprehensive as to how they would do. However, the adults have done a brilliant job and successfully reared 5 chicks in 2023.



Our hand-reared flock from 2022, which successfully integrated with the adults, could be seen showing a keen interest in the young chicks, and were also seen imitating the adults and 'sitting' on old nest sites. Fingers crossed for another generation of Flamingos!

As our Flamingos have been so successful, we have decided to build a new house for the group, to be built in Spring 2024. This will be situated nearby to their feeding area and will have a new pathway with public viewing of the house.

CONFERENCES AND WORKSHOPS



Written by
Chris Kibbey

Registrar and Assistant
Animal Manager

**I was joined
by 886 other
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The Cotswold Wildlife Park is a member of the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria and through this collaboration, animals are bred and exchanged between zoos in the UK and Europe as part of carefully managed captive breeding programmes, ensuring their survival in captivity while efforts are made to protect wild habitats.

With over 400 member institutions across Europe, EAZA provides a great opportunity for staff to attend meetings, conferences and workshops on a wide range of topics, meeting like-minded colleagues and sharing important information.

This year Nat, Section Head of Primates and Small Mammals, attended the EAZA Small Mammal TAG meeting in Frankfurt, Deputy Head of Birds Richard attended the EAZA Bird TAG meeting in Austria with Issy and Bird Keeper Jo joined the BIAZA Bird Working Group Conference at Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust.

On the Reptile Department, Meg and Matt attended the British Chelonia Workshop. Meg also went to the ABWAK (Association of British Wild Animal Keepers) Symposium, joined by Abbie from Mammals and Matt went to the ABWAK Osteopathy

Workshop with Abbie and Willemijn from Mammals.

On the Mammal Team, Willemijn attended the Giraffe Care Workshop, hosted by Bristol Zoo Project, Nick completed a wood chipping training course, James joined a Clouded Leopard Keepers Workshop at Howletts Wild Animal Park and Frankie went to the ABWAK Camelid Keepers Workshop. There were also many 'virtual' meetings throughout the year, which members of the animal team attended.

EAZA itself holds an annual conference, hosted by a different European Zoo each year. This year, I was fortunate to attend this conference, hosted by Korkeasaari Zoo in the beautiful city of Helsinki in Finland. I was joined by 886 other delegates from 372 institutions and 70 countries for four days of intensive meetings and plenary sessions and found it extremely useful and interesting. It's a very full agenda at the annual conference, and it is sometimes difficult to decide which meeting or workshop is the most important or valuable to attend. Luckily, my week was varied, as I was able to go to meetings on Flamingos, Storks, Rhinos, Marsupials, Primates, Reptiles and Small Mammals.



PRESENTING
Richard with his
talk on White
Storks

Articles below written by **Helen Hitchman**, Education Manager and **Lorah Wardle**, Education and Activities Officer

FLIGHT OF THE GIRAFFE

In February 2023 we welcomed Flight Lieutenants Mark Scott and Phoebe Valentine-Wood to the Park to meet our Giraffes and raise awareness of a special campaign; they were planning to raise funds for Great Ormond Street Hospital by flying toy giraffes in a RAF Voyager KC MK2 from RAF Brize Norton.

The charity 'Giraffes on Tour' was set up in memory of nine-year-old Louise Conway, who was a patient at Great Ormond Street Hospital in 2013. During her stay she was never without her cuddly giraffe Geoffrey. After she passed away, friends and family of her father Ian started flying cuddly giraffes in RAF aeroplanes and posting photos

and videos online. By coincidence Mark had been flying his own daughter's cuddly giraffes on Voyager. He got in touch with Ian at 'Giraffes on Tour' with a crazy idea; suppose they could find 291 cuddly giraffes to fill every passenger seat of a Voyager during a routine Air-to-Air Refuelling mission? This is where the idea of 'Flight of the Giraffes' was born, and since then they have been trying to raise as much awareness of the charity and of Louise's story as possible.

The flight was a huge success, raising £4000 for Great Ormond Street Hospital. Flt. Lt. Mark also drew a heart in the sky during the voyage, to symbolise the reason behind the event.

JON EGGING TRUST

Cotswold Wildlife Park started working with the Jon Egging Trust (JET) in the Spring of 2022. The Jon Egging Trust developed the Blue Skies Programme in memory of Flt. Lt. Jon Egging, the Red Arrows pilot who died when his Hawk jet crashed in 2011. Blue Skies is a three year STEM-inspired syllabus, which is an intensive, targeted, early intervention programme aimed at young people aged 11+ who are under-achieving at school and at risk of falling out of education due to life challenges and lack of confidence. Young people on the programme are offered access to unique team-building and workplace experiences, and mentored by inspirational volunteers who support them.

In the first year of working with JET, we arranged for a group of young people from Carterton Community College working towards their Blue Skies 1 to visit the Park. During their visit the students work on their public speaking skills, by listening to a talk from the keepers, researching a species at

the Park and then presenting this to their peers. In 2023, we extended our support for the initiative and in addition to the Blue Skies 1 group, we welcomed a group of Blue Skies 3 students. For these students, we organised a mock trial day to help develop their work readiness. The students got to muck out and feed some of the animals in the morning, including the giraffe, rhino, camels, meerkats, lemurs and penguins. After lunch, all of the students were interviewed by one of the Cotswold Wildlife Park staff in a mock interview.

The importance of these workplace experiences is evident from the feedback from the JET group and the students themselves, who prepare and deliver a short speech for the graduation ceremony in May. The students positively describe what they have gained from completing the programme, visiting places such as Cotswold Wildlife Park and how it has helped them develop personally.

