

## HERBERT WHITLEY - THE FOUNDER OF PAIGNTON ZOO

by Jo Gregson

Herbert Whitley moved to Devon in 1904. His father had died suddenly at the age of 67 and left a small fortune from his brewery business, which enabled Whitley's mother, Eleanor, to buy the Primley Estate in Paignton, to which she moved from their home town of Liverpool with her daughter and three sons.

Herbert and his brother William ran the estate and soon built up a reputation for breeding quality livestock. Their South Devon cattle were sold all over the world and their Devon Longwool sheep were sought after by local farmers. There was also a fine stable of Shire horses, which worked in the fields and were to be seen in the show ring under the Primley prefix.

Herbert had a passion for all living things, but above all he loved his pigeons. He bred many varieties for the show bench, as well as for racing. During wartime, his birds were used by the military to carry messages from our troops overseas. He loved the colour blue and would always strive to breed this colour into all of his livestock. For the Coronation in 1935, he bred the first blue Light Sussex poultry. Herbert even cultivated a blue mallow flower and named it the Primley Blue. The name Primley is derived from the Anglo-Saxon words *prim* and *ley* meaning morning meadow.

After a few years, William moved up onto Dartmoor and left the running of Primley solely to Herbert. In 1910, he bought his first exotic birds, a pair of Sulphur-crested Cockatoos *Cacatua galerita* and from there the collection grew until, in 1923, he opened Paignton Zoo. At the time a pair of Black Swans *Cygnus atratus* cost £6 6s 0d (approx. US\$10 at the present exchange rate). The zoo was to open and close twice during the following 14 years. Whitley had refused to pay entertainment tax on the grounds that his collection was educational and not for entertainment purposes. He was always keen for young people to learn and chose to close the zoo rather than back down.

Whitley was very much in touch with other collectors of that time. Both Delacour and Rothschild were great friends to him and he often sent material to (Rothschild's) Tring Museum. During the 1930s, Seth-Smith, Curator at London Zoo was charged £400 (approx. US\$640 at the present exchange rate) for a pair of Pigmy Hippopotamus *Hexaprotodon liberiensis*. A pair of manakins (Pipridae) from Clères cost a surprising £8 0s 0d (approx. US\$12.80), while bird dealers were charging as little as £1 10s 0d (approx. US\$1.75) for a pair of Red-billed Hornbills *Tockus erythrorhynchus*.



UK first breedings claimed by Whitley included: the Arabian Partridge *Alectoris melanocephala* (1927), Pheasant Pigeon *Otidiphaps nobilis* (1935), Black-naped Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus melanospila* (1932), Red Lory *Eos b. bornea* (c.1939), Dusky Lory *Pseudeos fuscata* (c.1939), Fischer's Lovebird *Agapornis fischeri* (1927), Blue-throated Conure *Pyrrhura cruentata* (1937) and Lilac-breasted Roller *Coracias caudatus* (1919).

When the Second World War broke out, Whitley was approached by Mr Goddard, the owner of Chessington Zoo (just south of London), who feared not only for the safety of his animals during bombing raids, but was also afraid that the more dangerous animals might escape. He asked if Paignton would take them until better times? Whitley agreed and took some of the staff as well, one of whom was the famous elephant keeper, Alex Smith. Alex gained notoriety later in life following his appearance with a young elephant named Comet on the popular childrens' TV programme *Blue Peter*. The elephant relieved herself in front of the TV cameras and then pulled over Alex and left him lying in the rather large, steamy, pool on the studio floor. To his embarrassment the event was captured on film and has become one of live television's funniest moments and years later continues to be shown on television.

Poor eyesight prevented Whitley from going to war and as a result he was able to remain behind and care for his collection of animals, though sadly, many of them had to be culled due to wartime food shortages.

There had always been kennels at Primley containing a few terriers, setters, spaniels and collies, all of which were working dogs and were also shown. Whitley's early show success was with Great Danes, in particular Primley Prodigal, who became a champion in 1912. Many of his Great Danes lived in the house - presumably to frighten off visiting salesmen. They were also used to control the feral cat population. In 1928, Theo Marples judged the greyhound Primley Sceptre the best of all breeds of the 9,466 entries at that year's Crufts Dog Show. Oddly, Primley Sceptre was never shown again and there appears to be no record of what happened to her. She may have died from one of the many canine curses, for Whitley did not have the luxury of our modern prophylactic measures and, as a result, many of his dogs died of distemper.

He devised some home-made remedies for treating livestock, including a mix of two thirds lard and one third gunpowder applied twice a day to regrow hair on broken knees. For ringworm he recommended one measure of creosote mixed with seven measures of linseed oil applied daily. When he became ill during 1909 the doctor treated him with strychnine. He was not at all well the following day but went on to make a full recovery and repaid the doctor's kindness by giving him a Great Dane puppy.



Herbert Whitley died on September 19th 1955 at the age of 69 and was buried in the family grave at St Peters Church, Buckland in the Moor, Dartmoor. (In place of the numerals, the churchyard clock face bears the words, "My Dear Mother" which William Whitley had done as a memorial to his mother). Herbert had never married and had no heirs, so following his death, the Herbert Whitley Trust was formed to carry on many of his aims. Over the years, he had built up the reputation of being a chain-smoking recluse, who rarely slept. All of his buildings were designed with several doors so that as someone came in through one door he could slip away quietly through another. He used a rather colourful version of the English language and never missed the opportunity to play a practical joke on someone. He was though well respected by the local community and has certainly left an impressive legacy for future generations.

In 1921, he bought the Slapton Ley and surrounding area in the South Hamms of Devon to prevent its likely development. Slapton Ley is unusual in comprising of two freshwater lakes not a stone's throw from the sea, thus creating a very diverse habitat. The land is leased to the Field Studies Council for a peppercorn rent of £1 (under US\$2) per annum, but with certain conditions, one of which is that no deck chairs or amusement arcades are allowed on the beach. It has a Field Studies Centre where up to 3,000 students are taught each year.

Paignton Zoo was the first UK zoo to introduce its own education unit whereby school groups can come and learn about animals first-hand. Today it can boast of having the largest centre in any zoo in the UK. A student scholarship is awarded annually by the Herbert Whitley Trust.

Whitley gifted two plots of land to local people. A playing field in the St Michaels area of Paignton and a 14 acre (approx. 6 hectares) site nearby for development as a sports centre. He was a passionate sportsman and, in particular, a lover of rugby football.

The Primley woodland and meadow adjacent to his home, he bequeathed to the people of Paignton. His house is now a home for the elderly and the small country park is much used by local people as a place to exercise their dogs. All in all he seems to have been rather a lonely man who cared very much for others. Herbert Whitley will be remembered as an unusual character and a great stockman.

*Since the above article was written, Jo Gregson (e-mail: jo.gregson@paigntonzoo.org.uk) has been promoted from Senior Head Keeper of Birds to Curator of Birds at Paignton Zoo Environmental Park, Totnes Road, Paignton, Devon TQ4 7EU, UK. It is owned by The Whitley Wildlife Conservation Trust, which also owns and runs the Living Coasts at Torquay and Newquay Zoo in Cornwall.*



## THE BLACK-AND-WHITE LAUGHINGTHRUSH

### *Garrulax bicolor*

In the previous issue of the magazine Vol.114, No.2, pp.70-78 (2008), Andrew Owen described the breeding of the Black-and-white Laughingthrush *Garrulax bicolor* at Waddesdon Manor aviaries. It is thought to be the first breeding in the UK of this recently recognised species. Furthermore, Andrew can find no record of it ever having been bred anywhere else in the world, so thinks that it might even be a 'world first'!

A further three chicks were hand-reared at Waddesdon during the 2008 breeding season, during which a more successful and trouble free hand-rearing diet was introduced. Papaya was no longer included in the diet, instead it consisted solely of pinkie mice, pureed to a runny consistency and first fed to the chicks 10 hours after they had hatched. Prior to this they received only a small amount of electrolyte fluid every 1½ hours to keep them hydrated.

The food was made courser as the chicks grew bigger and later they were given pieces of pinkie mice. At seven to eight days, waxmoth larvae, crickets and mealworms were added to the diet. The multivitamin supplement was also omitted from the 2008 hand-rearing process.

As far as I can recall, I first saw the Black-and-white Laughingthrush when the Avicultural Society visited Paultons Park in Hampshire in 2006, when it was known as the Sumatran Laughingthrush and continued to be treated as a subspecies of the White-crested species, i.e. *Garrulax leucolophus bicolor*. However, Andrew said, our President Raymond Sawyer, had told him that he had some 15-20 years ago. If anyone remembered them, I thought it would be Nigel Hewston or perhaps Philip Schofield or Dave Coles. Nigel said, he could certainly remember a pair that lived for some time in an aviary in the walled garden as you come out of the courtyard behind the Chestnut Lodge. The pair was the only ones he had seen prior to seeing them at Waddesdon and Paultons Park in the last couple of years. Nigel thought it had probably been in the 1980s, but could not be more specific.

A few weeks ago I had out Vol.93, No.3 (1987) of the magazine and, before putting it away, was flicking through the pages when I came upon Philip Schofield's report of the President's Garden Party - 1987 (pp.177-179) and there in the final paragraph was mention of the "White-crested Jay Thrushes from Sumatra." It would seem to have been the first reference to "*bicolor*" in the *Avicultural Magazine* and perhaps in UK aviculture. If you have any knowledge of this laughingthrush having been kept or bred in the past (or present), we would like to hear from you. -Ed.



## NEWS & VIEWS

### BRED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THE UK

Geoff Masson of Paultons Park in Hampshire is keen to trace anyone who keeps the Grey Laughingthrush *Garrulax maesi* and, in particular, is keen to find anyone with a spare male. The bird bred at Paultons Park a few months ago is now feeding itself and at the time he wrote (October 8th) was just beginning to moult. It is the first time this species from China, Vietnam and Laos has been bred in the UK. Geoff had the bird DNA sexed and it is a female. Paulton Park's three Grey Laughingthrushes appear to be the only examples of this species in the UK. Geoff has made contact with a breeder in Europe who has a single bird and hopes it will prove to be a male and the breeder will be prepared to exchange it for some other species he requires. He thinks he knows of another pair in a private collection in Europe and an attempt is being made to contact this other owner with the view to planning for the future of this laughingthrush in Europe.

The pair at Paultons Park laid a second clutch and hatched, it is believed, at least one chick. Unfortunately this occurred on the weekend that Geoff was on the society's visit to Berlin and he returned to find that it had been lost - probably due to the weather. If, as hoped, the pair nest again next year, Geoff plans to remove the eggs or perhaps remove the chicks and attempt to hand-rear them. If you know of any other Grey Laughingthrushes, Geoff can be contacted by telephone: 023 8081 4442 or e-mail: [Geoff@paultons.co.uk](mailto:Geoff@paultons.co.uk)

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### SUCCESS FOR VICE PRESIDENT

Avicultural Society Vice President Robin Restall, who lives in Caracas, Venezuela, is very happy that this year he has finally succeeded in breeding the Sooty Grassquit *Tiaris fuliginosa*. The successful pair, housed this time in Robin's aviary, built a fine, covered nest with a half-open front. (Robin described his earlier frustrating and unsuccessful attempts to breed this grassquit in the *Avicultural Magazine* Vol.111, No.2, pp.64-74 (2005).) At the time Robin wrote (October) a pair of Blue-black Grassquits *Volatinia jacarina* was raising its fourth brood in the same nest. A pair of Lesser or Chestnut-bellied Seed-Finches *Oryzoborus angolensis* had finally bred, only for the chicks to be thrown out and dumped in the mealworm bowl. This had left the female looking unhappy, while the male - who Robin suspected of having done the 'dirty deed' - was bouncing around and singing all the time. Unfortunately, Robin found the chicks too late to attempt to hand-rear them.



A pair of Saffron Finches *Sicalis flaveola* in interim or intermediate plumage caught by a neighbour in his garden, who really wanted an old male for its song, was given to Robin and within a week had two eggs in one of his spare breeding cages. Two Spectacled or Bare-eyed Thrush nestlings *Turdus nudigenis* were brought to Robin by the gardener at the end of June and later two fledglings were brought to him. The smaller of the nestlings had a broken leg and died, but the other three birds were reared and are the subject of some notes by Robin, which will be published in a future issue of the magazine.

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### AFTER A POOR START

Avicultural Society Vice President, Mike Curzon MBE, reports that after a poor start to the breeding season, results began to improve later in the year. By early September he had bred a Chestnut-backed Thrush *Zoothera dohertyi*, had three more Spot-flanked Barbets *Tricholaema lacrymosa* in the nest and had bred two Black-throated Barbets *T. melanocephala* - though sadly these were killed after they fledged. Mike has two breeding pairs of Emerald Doves *Chalcophaps indica* which, by early September, had produced 14 young and there were a further two aged one week old on the nest, plus another two eggs. He had bred two Common Bronzewings *Phaps chalcoptera* and had another one on the nest, had bred a Sulawesi Ground Dove *Gallicolumba tristigmata* and a Superb Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus superbus*, with another one on the nest. Following an earlier loss, the pair of Rose-crowned Fruit Doves *P. regina* was sitting on another egg. Two Black-naped Fruit Doves *P. melanospila* had been raised and there was another on the nest. Mike has, so far, had no luck with his Beautiful Fruit Doves *P. pulchellus* or his Coronated Fruit Doves *P. coronulatus*, but hopes they will breed next year.

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### CHOICE SPECIES

Earlier this year, Josef and Natalie Lindholm - who work at The Dallas World Aquarium, where Josef is Senior Aviculturist - spent 13 days in Germany, during which time they visited nine zoological collections.

They began at Frankfurt. The zoo does not have an especially large bird collection (101 species at the time of their visit), but boasts some choice species. At the top of the list I would place the Grey-necked Picathartes *Picathartes oreas*. Hatched at the zoo in 1984, it is the last remaining



picathartes in captivity (Chris Brack's 1994 colour photo of this bird was reproduced in Vol.110, No.2, p.94 (2004)). Having previously bred the White-necked species *P. gymnocephalus*, Frankfurt first bred the Grey-necked Picathartes in 1971 and is the only zoo ever to have bred this species. Another remarkable achievement by Frankfurt is to have kept and bred the Brown-throated Wattle-eye *Platysteira cyanea* for a number of years.

Among other species in the Bird House that caught their eye were a Shoebill *Balaeniceps rex*, a breeding group of Australasian Pied Herons *Egretta picata*, Little Pied Cormorants *Phalacrocorax melanoleucus*, (wild) Budgerigars *Melopsittacus undulatus*, Blue-winged Kookaburras *Dacelo leachii*, African Pygmy Kingfishers *Ispidina picta*, Polillo Tarric Hornbills *Penelopides panini subnigra*, Kikuyu White-eyes *Zosterops poliogaster kikuyuensis*, Painted Finches *Emblema pictum* and Cuban Finches (Grassquits) *Tiaris canora*. They saw a number of species which are managed as part of European zoo breeding programmes, including the Bali Starling *Leucopsar rothschildi*, Montserrat Oriole *Icterus oberi* and Socorro Dove *Zenaida graysoni*, the dove a species for which the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) studbook is maintained by Frankfurt's Curator of Birds, Stefan Stadler.

Frankfurt has been breeding Red-whiskered Bulbuls *Pycnonotus jocosus* almost continually since 1964, and they saw a flock of 40 or so in the free-flight hall. Most of the 100 or more that have been bred there have been distributed among European zoos. Apparently the Red-whiskered Bulbul, which was once common in US zoos, is currently exhibited only at Honolulu Zoo – this species lives in the wild on the island of Oahu, having been introduced onto Hawaii in the mid-1960s.

In Frankfurt's Grzimekhaus, they saw a colony of Social Weavers *Philetairus socius*, whose enormous compound nest dominates the exhibit the colony share with ground squirrels *Xerus* sp. Several generations of Social Weavers have been bred there since 1980 and, it is, as Josef said, like Frankfurt's breeding of the Red-whiskered Bulbul, another remarkable example of the long-term captive breeding of a species of passerine.

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## SPREADING ALONG THE RHINE

Josef and Natalie were surprised to see feral Ring-necked Parakeets *Psittacula krameri* flying free in Cologne Zoo and felt that they enhanced the generally park-like atmosphere of the zoo. It seems that this introduced-cum-escaped parakeet is now breeding in parts of Germany (as it is in parts of the UK) and is spreading steadily in increasing numbers along the Rhine.

## HELP FOR THE PARROTS OF HALMAHERA



David Waugh of Loro Parque Fundación reports that Burung (BirdLife) Indonesia has initiated a project to protect the 167,300 hectares (approx. 413,398 acres) Aketajawe-Lolobata National Park, and thereby protect several species of parrot found on the Indonesian island of Halmahera, North Maluku (the Northern Moluccas). Funding for the project is being provided by Loro Parque Fundación (LPF) of Spain, the Zoological Society for the Conservation of Species and Populations (ZGAP) and the Association for the Conservation of Threatened Parrots (ACTP), both of Germany, and the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

Halmahera is home to nine species of parrot, two of which - the White (or Umbrella) Cockatoo *Cacatua alba* and Chattering Lory *Lorius g. garrulus* - are of most concern. These two species are endemic to North Maluku, with the largest populations occurring on Halmahera. The other species are the Red-flanked Lorikeet *Charmosyna placensis*, Violet-necked Lory *Eos squamata*, Moluccan Hanging Parrot *Loriculus amabilis*, Moluccan (or Amboina) King Parrot *Alisterus amboinensis*, Red-cheeked Parrot *Geoffroyus geoffroyi*, Eclectus Parrot *Eclectus roratus* and Great-billed Parrot *Tanygnathus megalorhynchus*.

The clearance and fragmentation of the island's forests have accelerated rapidly since the early 1990s and, as well as being threatened by habitat loss, Halmahera's parrots continue to be under severe pressure from trapping to supply both the domestic and international cage bird trade. It was as a result of this that, from 1994-1999, the then BirdLife International Indonesia Programme collaborated with the Indonesian Directorate General of Nature Protection and Conservation on a project, also financially supported by the LPF, to identify priority areas for parrot and biodiversity conservation on Halmahera. This led to the declaration of Aketajawe-Lolobata National Park in 2004.

However, the park had very weak management and few resources and illegal logging and bird trapping continued. The current project aims to set up an effectively managed protected area that will secure the long-term future of the White Cockatoo, Chattering Lory and other threatened species and their habitat. During the first period of this project it is important for Burung Indonesia to establish a good working relationship with officials of Aketajawe-Lolobata National Park and the Ternate Natural Resources Conservation Division. It is also important that it monitors the current wildlife trade in North Maluku. Despite the fact that there have been no domestic or export quotas for parrot species since 1999, trade has continued and parrot trapping and trading locations, along with exit points, have been identified.



## MEMORIES OF DEREK GOODWIN

by John F. Burton

I was first introduced to Derek by the late Dr Denis F. Owen in the Bird Room of the Natural History Museum in South Kensington in August 1948 when I began work as a Scientific Assistant in the museum's Department of Entomology. I found Derek very friendly and eager to convey his immense enthusiasm for bird behaviour, especially that of corvids, pigeons and Phasianidae, of which he was most knowledgeable. We sometimes lunched together in the museum's restaurant or that of the Victoria and Albert Museum or in a local pub called *The Hoop and Toy*. On these occasions Derek talked almost nonstop about birds, particularly their behaviour, and was often so preoccupied that I feared for his life and limb when we crossed such busy thoroughfares as Cromwell Road.

In the early 1950s Derek was living at Virginia Water and occasionally invited me to his home to see the Lanceolated and European Jays and other corvids, Barbary Doves and gamebirds housed in his aviaries. The late Dr K. E. L. (Ken) Simmons was sometimes present and then our conversation usually concentrated on the Great Crested Grebe. A particular memory of Derek's home-cooked lunches was that the dessert invariably consisted of a Lyon's fruit pie beside which nestled two Yeast-vite tablets. Derek had a great fondness for salt and I noticed that he usually sprinkled it liberally on his food. Once when he visited my home, my mother was astonished when he sprinkled salt over slices of bread and jam. In a letter written in 2002, answering a letter in which I had mentioned that I had read that a low salt diet is believed by some experts to lessen the incidence of Ménière's disease, from which Derek had suffered, he scoffed at the idea and said he was continuing to eat salt, as he had done since the age of four, with "bread and butter, ice cream, cakes, bananas, etc., as well as with meat and potatoes, etc." Fortunately in his case, the disease had become less and less severe from the early 1990s and was hardly troubling him, apart from the fear that it might return. When it started it caused 60% hearing loss in his left ear, but had not affected his right ear and at the age of 83 he could still hear the high-pitched contact calls of Goldcrests and Long-tailed Tits. Although in his latter years he suffered from bouts of depression and often slept badly, awaking from nightmares, he obtained much consolation from his continuing interest in birds and, latterly, in butterflies and moths. In June 2002, he wrote, "I am not very well and rather depressed at the moment, but birds and butterflies still please me." He often dealt with his correspondence in the very early hours of the morning and from 2004 I found his handwriting





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