

A CRISIS AT THE ZOO

Troubles And Tribulations Of A Curator

IF C. J. Cutler, curator at the Wellington Zoo, could get his hands on a certain person (unknown) who visited the Zoo about a month ago there would be hair flying.

For this person passed on distemper to two valuable young Malayan sun bears. The bears developed distemper, and then, as if that were not enough, pneumonia on top of it, and for the past few weeks, they have been convalescing, one in a spare room in Mr. Cutler's home, the other in his wash-house.

Visitors to the zoo, says Mr. Cutler, seldom realise how easily distemper and other complaints can be passed on to animals. The household dog may have distemper; the hand which gives him a farewell pat on the head throws a piece of chocolate to a bear. Result, distemper. It is as simple as that.

However, according to the latest bulletin, the bears are out of danger, and provided they do not suffer a relapse (always on the cards, as sun bears do not take very kindly to this climate) they should be back on the old stand any day now.

Recent arrivals, the sun bears are among the most entertaining animals at the zoo. They are the buffoons of the bear tribe; they are loose jointed,

out to make a full-time job of what had been a hobby. He studied and worked at several American Zoos, principally the huge San Diego zoo.

America, of course, is the home of the zoo, if it can be put that way. As well as their catalogues, zoos there publish regular journals. The Chicago Zoo, one of the biggest in the world, extends over an area of more than 200 acres, and its animals are valued at millions of dollars.

While he was in California, Mr. Cutler had a regular veterinary session over

rest in America. The first tigrion originally had a curiosity value of £1,000 placed on it, but it was not long before an American collector of animals had succeeded in breeding two more, and bringing the value down to £850.

Two of the Wellington Zoo's most prized exhibits are a couple of Cape Barren geese, of which there are known to be only eight left alive. They are natives of Australia and were once prized highly for eating by the aborigines of the Cape York Peninsula. As a result of indiscriminate killing, they died out



IAN MACKAY AND C. J. CUTLER make friends with a small monkey, a recent addition to the Wellington Zoo

2ZB's "Spotlight" Session

Ian Mackay's "Saturday Spotlight" session from station 2ZB is undergoing a change of name and time. In future it will be presented on Friday night at 7.45 and will be known as "The Friday Spotlight."

Last Saturday, "Mac" interviewed Ralph Stewart, owner of the New Zealand racehorse Beau Vite, who performed so well in Australia. Next Friday he will bring to the microphone C. J. Cutler, curator at the Wellington Zoo, who has many interesting stories to tell about his job.

clumsy, always falling over themselves, always playing rough games. In Malay their native name means "pigeon-toed god."

Ills, Major and Minor

But his two sick sun bears are only one of the problems Mr. Cutler has to contend with. His days are spent attending to the ill, major and minor, of his many charges; he must be dietitian, bacteriologist, even, when the occasion arises, surgeon.

Mr. Cutler is one of the few New Zealanders who have gone abroad to specialise in veterinary science and zoology. After some years as a clerk in an insurance office in Christchurch, he set

KFI, Los Angeles, a station which was once received clearly in New Zealand on the broadcast band. He looks back on it as one of the busiest times of his life. It was not so much compiling his programme as answering the piles of letters he received and dispensing free advice.

Full Time Job

Back in New Zealand Mr. Cutler was for some time at the Auckland Zoo, but then transferred to Wellington, where, although the zoo is smaller, he has a full-time job on his hands.

The result of his American-gained experience is already apparent. For instance, he set out to breed beaver cubs, which has never before been done in this country. He has just noticed signs which tell him he has achieved success, and that in the near future there will be a blessed event in the beaver family.

He has also bred a fine healthy pair of lion cubs, and when they grow up he intends trying to breed a "tigrion," a cross between a lion and a tiger. There are not more than half a dozen tigrions in the world, one in Germany and the

rapidly, and it will not be many years before the species is quite extinct, as no zoo in the world has a goose and a gander from which to breed.

A Sidelight

A sidelight of Mr. Cutler's job is the pacification of Wellington residents who are worried by strange animals in their back gardens. Apparently anyone within ten miles of the zoo who finds an opossum in the garden is convinced it is a bear escaped from the zoo, and phones up Mr. Cutler.

On one occasion Mr. Cutler was phoned by a woman who nervously described a huge animal which was loping round her lawn. Could Mr. Cutler bring a gun? The description fitted one of the larger varieties of black bear, and without bothering to inspect his bear cages, Mr. Cutler set out to the rescue.

The animal was a greyhound, and now, when he is summoned from bed at midnight on a similar errand, he merely inspects his cages to see that nothing is missing, and then returns to bed. It is sure to be just another 'possum.

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