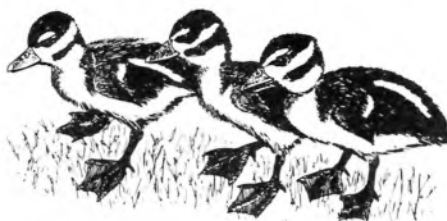


Progress in Aviculture by The Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust during 1990

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Spotted Whistling Ducks

Breeding and developments

A major objective for the 1990 breeding programme was the provision of a large and varied group of wildfowl at the new Centre at Llanelli in South Wales. The policy of introducing only eggs or, under strict conditions, downy young, and of vaccinating all young birds against avian tuberculosis, was continued. Eggs came largely from other Trust Centres but we are also grateful to several other aviculturists for eggs supplied for this project. At the end of 1990 over 750 birds were held at Llanelli, which is open to visitors from April 1991. Over 600 birds of 81 kinds were reared in 1990. A wide variety of species is represented including Spotted *Dendrocygna guttata*, Eyton's *D. eytoni* and several other whistling ducks, most swans, and a range of geese and ducks, including Australian Shelduck *Tadorna tadornoides*, Greater Magellan Goose *Chloephaga picta leucoptera*, Bronzewinged Duck *Anas specularis*, Chinese Spotbill *Anas poecilorhyncha zonorhyncha* and Goosander *Mergus m. merganser*. Threatened birds bred include Hawaiian Goose *Branta sandvicensis*, Blue Duck *Hymenolaimus malacorhynchus*, White-winged Wood Duck *Cairina scutulata* and White-headed Duck *Oxyura leucocephala*.

Another Wildfowl & Wetlands Centre was opened in 1990 at Comber in Northern Ireland. Castle Espie, on the shores of the important wetland at Strangford Lough, is run in partnership with owners Paddy and Julie Mackie, who built up an impressive wildfowl collection over a number of years which now includes 48 species. Light-bellied Brent Geese *Branta bernicla hrota* and Red-breasted Merganser *Mergus s. serrator* have both bred, and other seaducks including Barrow's Goldeneye *Bucephala islandica* and Smew *Mergus albellus* nest well. In 1990, breeding was affected by redevelopment to improve the visitor facilities, but the Centre will play an important role in the Trust's

avicultural programmes. Animal health regulations require that a quarantine station is built before birds or eggs can be moved to Northern Ireland. This is planned for 1991.

The provision of eggs to Llanelli resulted in other Centres rearing fewer birds than usual. At Martin Mere, the opportunity was taken to redevelop the rearing facilities including a redesigned indoor duckery. The total number of birds reared at all Centres reached 1949 of 116 kinds.

Six whistling duck were reared including 20 Cuban *D. arborea* at Arundel, and all the swans bred. A previously unsuccessful pair of Bewick's Swans *Cygnus columbianus bewickii* at Arundel reared three cygnets, a particularly welcome event as the female of the previous breeding pair died. This makes the new pair the only successful one in Europe, though other females are producing infertile eggs at both Arundel and Castle Espie.

Twenty-two kinds of geese were reared, though some smaller geese, such as Ross's *Anser rossii* and Brents, did not produce many eggs. Red-breasted Geese *Branta ruficollis* bred well at Washington and Peakirk, and two Light-bellied Brent were reared at Castle Espie.

Results from shelducks and sheldgeese were disappointing generally, though Andean Geese *Chloephaga melanoptera* reared young at Arundel. Orinoco Geese *Neochen jubatus* started the season with fertile eggs at two Centres, but at Martin Mere the incubating female was predated, while at Slimbridge a clutch of eggs was lost to a human predator, although four young were reared at Slimbridge from eggs rescued at Martin Mere. Young of ten species were reared in all.

A variety of dabbling ducks bred, including Chinese Spotbills and North American Black Duck *Anas rubripes* which were housed off-exhibit at Slimbridge in mesh-covered pens to exclude wild Mallard *A. platyrhynchos* which often cause hybridisation problems. Cape

Shoveler *A. smithi* also bred off-show and other species will be targeted for similar housing in future.

Blue Ducks again laid at Arundel; the first clutch of eggs was moved to Llanelli where three young were reared, and two were reared at Arundel from the second clutch. A pair of the 1989 offspring was moved to Slimbridge where they are housed presently in a sheltered aviary.

A variety of other species bred, including American Eiders *Somateria mollissima dresseri* for the first time at Washington. Five pairs of White-winged Wood Duck produced fertile eggs; young were reared from two of these and from two pairs held elsewhere on loan. Thirteen Goosanders were reared at Llanelli from eggs laid at Martin Mere and, among the stiff-tails, Maccoas *Oxyura maccoa* had a particularly successful season at Slimbridge.

Chilean *Phoenicopterus chilensis*, Greater *P. ruber roseus* and Caribbean Flamingos *P. r. ruber* bred well at Slimbridge, rearing 13, 12 and 18 chicks respectively. For the first time,

the Greater flock laid in two separate "bouts", with the first egg of the second period laid 32 days after the last egg of the first. Chicks were reared from both groups of eggs.

The Chileans at Peakirk were the only other flamingos to lay. Two eggs were laid, both deserted. One was incubated artificially and moved "pipping" to Slimbridge where a chick was hatched and reared by a pair whose own egg was infertile.

Sixteen Greater Flamingos were received following a confiscation at Heathrow airport, and these have been added to the Slimbridge flock. A pair of Thick-billed Bean Geese *Anser fabalis serratirostris* and three Chinese Spotbills were received from Moscow Zoo. Birds were exported to Moscow Zoo, Hong Kong Zoological and Botanical Gardens and Jurong Bird Park, Singapore.

At the end of 1990, the Trust held 8307 wildfowl and flamingos of 165 species and subspecies. A list of birds held and reared in 1990 is available from Nigel Hewston.

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