Walsrode Bird Park, Germany

In the seventh year of 'Project Tsimbazaza', a cooperative endeavour between Walsrode, the Parc Botanique et Zoologique de Tsimbazaza (PBZT) and the Madagascan Ministry of Higher Education, we can again report great steps forward in our efforts to establish Madagascan species in captivity.

We imported our first four Madagascar crested ibis (*Lophotibis cristata*) in December 1998, added another five in January 2000 and two more in December 2001. Since the first captive breeding in 2001, the population has increased to 39 birds, 27 of which were bred in captivity. Meanwhile, the species has also reproduced successfully at Zürich Zoo, San Diego Zoo and PBZT. We hand-reared all the offspring to quickly increase the initial captive population. The youngest female to produce fertile eggs was only 18 months old at the time. Hand-rearing proved not to be detrimental to breeding success, as ibises hand-reared at Walsrode successfully reared offspring at San Diego and Zürich. There are currently seven holding institutions: the species is now well established, and is expected to number a hundred birds in captivity within the next five years.

The Madagascar blue pigeon (*Alectroenas madagascariensis*) was apparently never kept in captivity before we imported seven birds in early 2004. Six of these were mist-netted near fruiting bushes in rain-forest patches, and readily accepted pieces of fruit, fruit eater pellets, and small berries collected in the wild. One bird was taken from the nest at the age of approximately five days and hand-reared. These pigeons receive the mixed fruit and pellet diet for frugivores offered to all our fruit-doves and cotingas. Even the birds captured in nets were remarkably placid when compared to many other doves and pigeons. In March 2005, the hand-reared female bird and one of the males incubated a single egg in a halved coconut. Incubation took approximately 17 days and the chick fledged after another 17 days. The young bird resembles squabs of *Ptilinopus* doves; the species-specific dark red upper tail coverts were present in the chick at fledging time.

The blue coua (*Coua caerulea*) is a spectacular member of its genus, the ten species of which are endemic to Madagascar. Together with the blue pigeons, we received nine (7.2) birds; all had been taken from nests at an age of between five and ten days and were hand-reared. One pair laid three eggs, one per clutch, which is the usual number in this species. All three hatched, but unfortunately only one chick was reared, which luckily turned out to be a female. With its low reproductive rate, this species may take a long time to become established.

Madagascar pond herons (*Ardeola idae*) are becoming increasingly rare due to habitat conversion and replacement by the rapidly increasing and spreading numbers of squacco heron (*A. ralloides*), which together with the cattle egret now dominates mixed heronries throughout Madagascar. There are reports – not yet verified – of hybridisation between the two heron species. This seems possible, since the latter now greatly outnumbers its Madagascan congener – indeed, one of the ten birds imported in early 2004 seems to be a hybrid. In March 2005 we received another ten birds, which will hopefully form a viable captive nucleus for the future of this rare species.

The Madagascar sacred ibis (*Threskiornis bernieri*), together with its subspecies on Aldabra (*T. b. abbotti*) is now considered a separate species from the African sacred ibis (*T. aethiopicus*). It differs in habitat, size, extent of black coloration of the wing tips and iris colour, which is brownish-red in *aethiopicus* and pale blue in *bernieri*. Because of this distinctive character, we suggest the name blue-eyed ibis for the species. We imported 20 young birds in March 2005 that had been collected from markets along the north-western coast of Madagascar, where blue-eyed ibises breed on remote mangrove islands. The birds were reared by Mario Perschke, Walsrode's representative at PBZT, and shipped to Walsrode shortly after fledging. All the birds acclimatised very well and are in perfect condition. This species is listed as endangered because of large-scale destruction of its mangrove habitat, hunting of adults, and collecting of juveniles and eggs for food. There may be fewer than 2,000 left in the wild. Walsrode has a long history of successful reproduction of Threskiornithidae, and having 20 birds as founders, we are confident that we will establish a strong and genetically diverse population in captivity.

Dieter Rinke in *EAZA News* No. 53 (January–March 2006)

[For a summary of a report by Mario Perschke about some conservation projects in Madagascar, see below, p. 190.]

The Wilds, Cumberland, Ohio, U.S.A.

An Indian rhinoceros gave birth to a female calf on 25 October 2005, the first at the Wilds and one of only four surviving births of this species in North America during the year. The delivery, on a day with sudden unseasonably cold weather, proved to be a challenge for the animal management, maintenance, and conservation medicine staff. The birth initiated a concerted team effort to rescue the hypothermic baby and bring it into the barn to be gradually warmed. When the veterinary group supplemented the nutrition of the calf for the first three hours and started a 24-hour monitoring, she was able to stand and attempt to nurse. After some effort, the mother was reunited with her calf in the barn area.

The Wilds, which has an area of nearly 10,000 acres [4,000 ha], is an environment that encourages breeding through natural social systems and natural food sources. This facility is able to research species in an open environment in order to better understand ecological habitats and help advance conservation. It serves as a leader in captive rhinoceros programs around the world and is a member of the International Rhino Foundation (IRF), which supports both *in situ* and *ex situ* programs for all rhino species. The director of the Wilds, Dr Evan Blumer, serves on the IRF Board of Directors and is chairman of the AZA Rhino TAG.

Both mother and calf are doing fine and are a positive step in the captive breeding of the species. There are a total of 56 Indian rhinos in North American zoological programs. An additional concern for this species in captivity is the gender ratio of the newest generation, which is heavily skewed towards males, making this birth a very important event.

Communiqué (American Zoo and Aquarium Association), January 2006

Zoo Atlanta, Georgia, U.S.A.

Kuchi, a 21-year-old female gorilla, gave birth to twins on 31 October 2005. The birth of twin gorillas is extremely rare – only six instances have been recorded since 1966 in North American zoos, with only three sets surviving. The 1.1 twins, who have been named Kali and Kazi, are the first offspring born to the zoo's newest silverback Taz and the third and fourth offspring for mother Kuchi. A few weeks later, another female, Kudzoo, gave birth to a female infant, Macy. And in late April the zoo is expecting the arrival of eight-year-old Sukari's first baby.

Fifteen gorillas have been born and mother-reared at Zoo Atlanta since 1988. With a total of 22, the zoo has the second largest gorilla collection in North America [after Bronx Zoo with 27 – *Ed.*].

Communiqué (American Zoo and Aquarium Association), January 2006, with additional material from the Zoo Atlanta website