

We also receive, generally at short notice, birds, mammals and reptiles as confiscated specimens from the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the Department of Customs and Excise. These unplanned animal arrivals place considerable strain on our quarantine and holding facilities and on our zoological staff. Members of staff are also made available to assist organisations whenever requested.

A major arrival, on February 25, was a male Pygmy Sperm whale which had been found stranded on Garie Beach and then was taken to Taronga Zoo. Pygmy Sperm whale strandings are rare and little is known about these animals. The animal appeared to be in obvious distress, requiring extensive veterinary care and constant attention in the pool by Keeping staff and other zoo staff on a 24-hour basis. However, despite these valiant efforts by all concerned, the whale died in the early evening of March 4, and a preliminary investigation into the death found massive worm infestation in the right ear and strangulation of the intestine.

At the request of the Department of the Special Minister of State, Taronga Zoo received six Australian sea lions in April for the purpose of quarantining them for three months prior to their departure for the Australian Exhibit at Expo 75 in Okinawa.

Western Plains Zoo: Considerable progress was made with the construction of the Western Plains Zoo at Dubbo. Expenditure was \$360,395, and a total amount over half a million dollars in grants and loan funds from the N.S.W. Government has now been absorbed.

On November 22, 1974, the Minister for Lands and Tourism, the Hon. T. L. Lewis, unveiled a plaque on the site to commemorate the establishment of the zoo.

The perimeter of the zoo site was fenced at a cost of \$79,450 and the garage/workshop and barn/food store were completed. Work progressed satisfactorily on the exhibit areas, service roads and water supplies, and contracts were let for the construction of the main buildings. The first consignment of animals from Taronga was sent to Dubbo on May 14, 1975, and two senior keepers were transferred to care for them.

It was anticipated that the opening date for the zoo would be approximately August 1976, but owing to the escalation in costs, this will not be possible.

Exhibits Division

Mammal Department: The off-exhibit area of the Nocturnal House has been successfully converted to a marsupial breeding area, with a self-contained unit included for photography and research.

The African swamp exhibit in the old Pere David yard will display swamp animals and plants from tropical West Africa.

Aquarium: Work was commenced on the design of a new aquarium on the site of Taronga Wharf. The building will incorporate a new wharf and a harbour-side restaurant. In this regard, the Curator of Fishes made a world study tour and the scheme being developed will bring to Taronga one of the most advanced aquariums in the world.

Bird Department: The inventory of June 30, 1975 discloses 1,628 birds in the collection, representing 309 orders and 65 families.

Four families were lost during the year (goshawks, Fantail fly-catchers, Cuckoo shrikes, Monarch fly-catchers). The hawks, which are received regularly as injured donations, were loaned to a falconry project at the international air terminal. The remaining three families were represented by only one individual. Two new families were added during the year (darters, starlings), and eight additional species over last year. The collection is down by 100 in numbers from last year. Part of this is a deliberate reduction in large numbers of overcrowded birds, and part is the result of being unable to replace birds that have been lost by attrition.

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Photo: H. Millen

Most important birth of the year at Taronga Zoo was 'Cody' a Black rhino. The perpetuation of Australian rhino stock may well depend on this little fellow.