

## Nine zoos in thirteen days, or if this is Monday, it must be Hanover!



The Madagascar Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis b. bernieri*) was recently recognized as a species distinct from those of the African mainland.

*By Josef Lindholm, III,  
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Photography by Natalie Mashburn Lindholm*

*Editor's note: Josef Lindholm made his first trip to Germany, for 13 days, in April and May 2008, in the company of his wife, Natalie, who had been there once 10 years before. Among the nine zoos they visited, they saw well over 800 species and subspecies of birds, perhaps closer to 1,000, of which at least 110 were birds he had never seen in captivity before. This is the second part of his report on their trip.*

### **Erlebnis-Zoo Hanover**

ERLEBNIS MEANS EXPERIENCE, and that is what the current administration of the Hanover zoo promises to deliver to its visitors. More than most European collections, this 145 year old, 54 acre zoo in Lower Saxony has come to resemble a theme park, designed to immerse people in exotic adventures. I was amused to see that part of this "immersion" involves numerous signs in English in the

"Sambesi" (African) and "Dschungelpalast" (Indian) experiences. There will be many more in the soon to be completed "Yukon Bay," where along with Polar Bears, caribou, seals, and wolves, visitors will find the "The Northern-most Penguin Zoo in the World." To explain the presence of penguins in Alaska, the designers of this exhibit have concocted the story of Captain Henry Charters, en route to California from (!) South Africa, who ran his "Yukon Queen" aground, and then decided to convert his ship into "Henry's Underwater World," where along with his penguin cargo, Polar Bears and pinnipeds will be viewed from beneath glass ceilings.

From the 1920's into the 1960's the Hanover Zoo served as the show room of the animal dealing firm Ruhe, with most of the animals available for sale to zoos and circuses. This led to an emphasis on "charismatic

# BIRDS IN GERMAN ZOOS PART II

megavertebrates." The rise of the not far away Vogelpark Walsrode in the 1960's did not encourage the development of a major bird collection. However, birds are very much in evidence.

"Sambesi," could be considered a sort of Disney jungle boat ride with real animals. Visitors travel in low-riding boats past Hippos, Giraffes, Black Rhinos, Impalas, and such rarities as Somali Wild Asses and Red Hartebeest (Hanover has been famous for African Antelope for a very long time). Birds are everywhere: South African Ostriches, East African Crowned Cranes, breeding Stanley Cranes, Cattle Egrets, Great Cormorants, African Wood Storks, and Marabous. Somewhat more than half of the flock of nearly a hundred Flamingos are Chilean (which breed), most of the rest being Old World Greater, with a few Caribbeans. The many ducks are from everywhere. Our friend, the zoo enthusiast extraordinaire and Koeln Zoo Okapi keeper Peter Zwanzger, told me that Carsten Zehrer, Hanover's Biologist, had made a point of creating flocks of especially attractive waterfowl, with an emphasis on males, to create a spectacle. I was especially pleased to see a group of Maned Geese (or Australian Wood Ducks). Not far away from the boat ride is an exhibit for Old World White Pelicans. More Ducks can be seen in the "Jungle Palace," an ornately decorated Indian ruins, with marketplace, which may remind American of Disney Animal Kingdom's "Anandapur"

Elsewhere, are exhibits for Snowy, Great Gray, and European Eagle Owls, the current display for South African Penguins, White Storks in the charming (and very authentic) "Myer's Farm," and a walk-through shorebird exhibit, with the expected flock of European Avocets, as well as a flock of Redshanks (*Tringa totanus*). While Redshanks are not rare in European zoos, I have never seen this largish Old World sandpiper in any American collection. I only saw my first specimens earlier that day, at Lundi Farm, the astounding private collection of Ludger Bremehr, open by appointment only.



Of the five species of Ground Rollers, found only in Madagascar, the Pitta-like Ground Roller (*Atelornis pittoides*) is the most tolerant of habitat disturbance. Aside from this bird in Walsrode's Tropenwaldhalle the only other specimens living outside of Madagascar are five at the Zurich Zoo.

There, in the company of Peter Zwanzger, who had arranged the visit, we were able to see eight taxa of Eiders, Chilean Torrent Ducks, Kelp Geese, South Georgia Pintails, and Jankowski's Swans, among what is one of the finest waterfowl collections in the world, along with Atlantic Puffins and Arctic Terns. Ludger told me that captive Redshanks never have the bright red legs of wild birds. Despite having bright orange legs, the captive birds are none the less quite handsome.

Having stayed at Lundi Farm far longer than we'd anticipated, there were a number of bird exhibits at Erlebnis-Zoo Hannover that we did not have time to experience before the park closed. These included aviaries for Bald Eagles, Andean Condors, and Lammergeiers (whose offspring, like those of Wuppertal's and Tierpark Berlin's birds, have been released into the wild). There was also the Tropical House, primarily for monkeys and reptiles, but also with a lory feeding aviary inhabited mostly by Swainson's Lorikeets, with a few Green-napes. Perhaps that's where the flock of Java Sparrows, listed by ISIS lives, but maybe they were in the nearby Great

Ape Forest.

### Vogelpark Walsrode

HAVING BEEN PICKED UP by Peter Zwanzger in Wuppertal that morning, heading north and east to Lundi Farm, then Hannover, we arrived at early evening at Walsrode, for decades the Mecca of aviculturists world-wide. Founded in 1962, Vogelpark Walsrode reached a respectable two hundred or so taxa of birds by the mid-'60's, stood at over 300 species and subspecies by 1969, then exploded to around 600 by the end of 1970 (according to the statistics of the International Zoo Yearbook). By the mid-1970's Walsrode held over 900 taxa of birds, and having out-stripped the San Diego Zoo several years before, was the largest collection of birds in the world. I have heard the collection, at one point, exceed 1,000 taxa, though 980, at the end of 1976, is the most I've seen mentioned by the IZY (San Diego, at the end of 1969, achieved its all time end-of-the-year inventory of 1,126 taxa).

In 1978, Walsrode, which was then only open from March through November, received 1.4 million visitors (Low,



While there are only two species of shrikes in North America, six may be observed in Europe. This is a Red-backed Shrike (*Lanius collurio*) in Vogelpark Walsrode's native bird exhibit.

2007). In recent years, there has not been as much public enthusiasm and there have been some financial difficulties, as well as a change of ownership. There have been rumors that the park may close. At present, however, Vogel Park Walsrode is very much in existence. As of April, 2008, there were 588 species and subspecies of birds, as well as a nice collection of frogs, a few interesting mammals, such as Madagascar Ring-tailed Mongoose, Goodfellow's Tree Kangaroos, and Cotton-top Tamarins, and well as such fishes as the Chinese Sailfin Sucker.

I was able to visit the park for parts of two days and all of a third. For a good portion of this time Natalie and I had excellent guides. Simon-Bruslund Jensen arrived, from the Al Wabra Wildlife preservation in Qatar, in 2007, as Curator. He is now Zoological Director for the Park. He had worked at Walsrode in previous years and as a teenager in Denmark, kept and bred softbills. Simon will be familiar to the readers of Watchbird for his regular articles on current happenings at the park. He spent several hours with us. We also greatly benefited from the company of Peter Zwanzger, who had visited Walsrode

many times, and was able to tell us exactly what had been exhibited where in times past.

Before we saw many of the public exhibits, we were taken through the propagation center and other off-exhibit areas. Among the chicks being hand-reared were the endangered Lesser Kestrel, a Hawk Owl,

a Milky Eagle Owl, Red-collared Lorikeets, Humboldt Penguins, Peruvian Pelicans, and Blue Couas. The latter are one of a number of Madagascar species brought into aviculture by Walsrode, through a long-standing program involving extensive field work and commitment to in situ projects. The presence of Crested Couas and Crested Ibises in an increasing number of collections around the world is due to Walsrode. A unique collection of 21 Madagascar species is held at the park. Among the species we were shown off exhibit were Giant Couas, Sickle-billed Vangas (with a loud peacock-like call, unexpected in a passerine bird), and the bizarrely shaped Cuckoo Rollers. There was also the colony of Madagascar Pond Herons, a species being genetically swamped by the related Squacco Heron from the African Mainland, which has swept across the island as a result of habitat alteration. Other off-display birds we admired included Horned Guans (of which another pair are on public exhibit), Grayson's Doves, Pink-spotted Fruit Doves (with which Walsrode has done especially well), Brolga Cranes, a Malay White-crested Hornbill, African White-crested (or Long-tailed) Hornbills, Splendid Starlings, and King and Twelve-



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wired Birds of Paradise.

At 122 species and subspecies, Walsrode's Parrot collection is around half of what it was in the 1970's and '80's. Be that as it may, viewing this collection is an overwhelming experience. The only comparable experience I have had was at San Diego more than twenty years ago. Most are concentrated among two buildings (one devoted to Lories and Fig Parrots), and rows of outdoor flights. There are other displays here and there in the park, including an exhibit for Slender-billed Conures. The rows of outdoor aviaries are remarkable in that there are often combinations of species therein. Among the birds in these flights were a pair of Blue-eyed Cockatoos, Timor Crimson-winged Parrots, all three species of *Polytelis*, big flocks of Elegant Grass Parakeets and Pacific Parrotlets (which people tell me can't be kept in flocks), Swift Parrots, Horned Parrots with Kagus, Moustached Parakeets (inventoried as *P. alexandri major*, from the Lasia and Babi Islands), Derbyan Parakeets, Michoacan Halfmoon Conures (*A. canicularis eburnirostrum*), Black-headed Caiques, and Mountain Parakeets (*Psilopsiagon aurifrons*). I had not previously seen two species of *Brotogeris*, both small green birds: *B. tirica*, the Plain Parakeet, and *B. c. cyanoptera*, the Cobalt-winged Parakeet. The gorgeous Rose-fronted subspecies of the Painted Conure (*Pyrrhura picta roseifrons*) was also a first sighting for me.

Inside the main parrot house, I saw my first Racket-tailed Parrot, the Buru species (*Prioniturus mada*), a larger bird than I had imagined. I thought it strangely proportioned. Its rackets were rather odd little appendages to its tail. Another new genus for me was *Triclaria*, whose one species, the Purple-bellied Parrot (*T. malachitacea*), found only in Brazil, is often placed at the very end of parrot classification systems. Walsrode inventories ten. I saw three on display. They all had their bellies pointed away, but their peculiar shape, eclectic shade of green, and pale bills made them unmistakable. Another new species for me was the Yellow-faced Parrotlet (*Forpus xanthops*). Among other inhabitants of this building were a Pesquet's Parrot, Queen of Bavaria Conures, Yellow-shouldered Amazons, and the first Vinaceous Amazons I had seen in a long time.

In the famed Lory Atrium, Peter Zwanzger counted 28 taxa of birds on exhibit. New lory species for me were the Emerald Lorikeet (*Neopsittacus pullicauda*), Yellow-bibbed Lory (*Lorius chlorocercus*), and the Josephine's Lorikeet (*Charmosyna josefinae*). I will remember the hybrid Josephine's X Papuan Lorikeets at the now defunct Crystal Gardens, in Victoria, British Columbia. Their parents, at San Diego Zoo, were never placed on exhibit. New subspecies were a Rajah Lory (*Chalcopsitta atra insignis*), kept with the offspring it sired from a Chattering Lory, still its companion, and Yellow and Green Lorikeets (*Trichoglossus f. flavoriviridis*), which I through rather strange looking. Another species I had not seen before was the Orange-breasted Fig Parrot (*Opopsitta guliemitertii*). Walsrode holds eight of these elegant little parrots, which I don't believe have been kept in North



Scheepmaker's Crowned Pigeons (*Goura scheepmakeri*) in Walsrode's Tropenwaldhalle. Due to management decisions to concentrate on the other two species of Crowned Pigeons, there are only two American zoos that currently exhibit this species. However, there are more than twenty institutions working with this species in Continental Europe and the UK.

America. There were also Edward's, Desmerest's and Double-eyed Fig Parrots. Other Lory Atrium inhabitants I particularly remember are a Fairy Lorikeet, the first Striated Lorikeets I'd seen outside of a private collection, Cardinal and Blue-eared Lorries, and two Tahiti Blue Lorries. Just outside this building was an aviary with four Purple-bellied Lorries (*Lorius hypoinochrous*), which I'd otherwise only seen at the Bronx Zoo, years ago.

There are three great concentrations of Soft-billed Birds at Walsrode. Near the front entrance is the Paradise Hall, which was built in 1968. There are two sections: a vast hall of individual aviaries, and a huge, sunny walk-through hall. Among the great array of birds in the aviary hall are two male Andean Cocks of the Rock. One was hatched at Wuppertal. From their red eyes, I think Wuppertal's

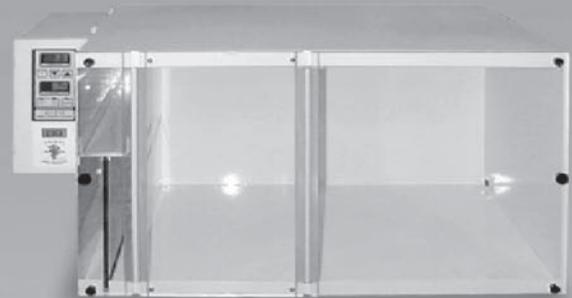
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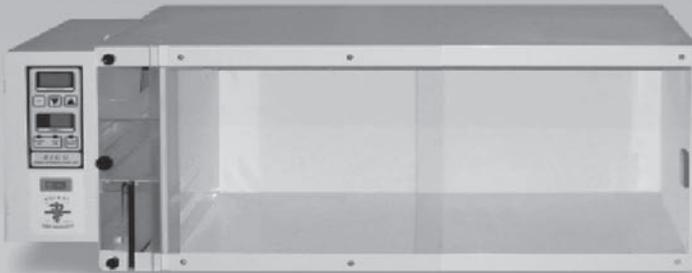
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View of the Tropenwaldhalle (Tropical Forest Hall) at Walsrode.

birds might be the western Scarlet subspecies (*R. p. sanguinolenta*). The breeding pair are on loan from the Chilean Aviculturist Michael Durand. Walsrode's other male has yellow eyes. Simon Bruslund-Jensen tells me it came from Ecuador, so I think it safe to say it is of the subspecies (*R. p. equatorialis*). This bird arrived with a mate which died a short time ago. Its nest was still present in the aviary. Other birds in this section, which stand out in my memory, are Carmine Bee-eaters (some nearly twenty years old, which have bred here since the 1990's), a Copper Sunbird, a Long-tailed Ground Roller (*Uratelornis chimerae*) and some Sakalava Weavers from Madagascar, Madagascar Mannikins (or Bib Finches), Timor Zebra Finches, Golden-headed Quetzals, White-tailed Trogons, Sumatran Blue-tailed Trogons (*Harpactes reinwardtii mackloti*, which bred at Walsrode), and South American White Woodpeckers.

In the walk-through area of the Paradise Hall I saw my first Pope Cardinal (*Paroaria dominicana*), a Brazilian bird that's not that rare in Europe, but presently nonexistent in the U.S.. Other memorable species in this aviary included giant Turacos, Scarlet-headed Marshbirds, Madagascar Blue Pigeons, Pin-tailed Whydahs, Crested (Mountain Witch) and Ruddy Quail Doves, a large flock of Red Bishops, and the first Small-billed Tinamous I'd seen in more than twenty years.



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In 2000, to coincide with the World's Fair EXPO 2000, at Hanover, Walsrode opened a truly enormous indoor walk-through aviary, the Tropenwaldhalle (Tropical Forest Hall) featuring the wildlife of Asia, New Guinea, and the islands in between. An exception to this rule is a specimen of the stunning Pitta-like Ground Roller (*Atelornis pittoides*) from Madagascar. It took two trips through this huge space (replete with Indonesian artwork) to find this Madagascan bird. Other softbills include a female Giant Pitta, the only Dark-throated Oriole (*Oriolus xanthonotus*) and Javan Whistling Thrushes (*Myiophonus g. glaucinus*) I've seen, Orange-headed and Sumbawa Ground Thrushes, and big flocks of Grosbeak Starlings and Chestnut-backed Scimitar Bblers. Pigeons and doves were everywhere. Species that stand out in my memory include Moluccan White-throated Pigeons (*Columba vitiensis halmabeira*), Thick-billed Ground Doves (*Trugon terrestris*), Green-naped Pheasant Pigeons, Sclater's subspecies of the Scheepmaker's Crowned Pigeons (Walsrode has all three species of Goura), Nicobar Pigeons, Golden-heart and Sulawesi Ground Doves, Blue-tailed Imperial Pigeons, and the Louisade and D'Entrecasteaux subspecies of the Imperial Pigeon (*Ducula pinon salvadorii*, without the scalloping seen on the wings of the New Guinea subspecies (*D. p. jobiensis*) held in U.S. collections).

Other birds in the free-flight area of the Tropenwaldhalle included a Salawati King Parrot (*Alisterus amboinensis dorsalis*), Bankiva Red Junglefowl, Malay Argus Pheasants, Javan Whistling Ducks rearing their own ducklings, and Misol Wattled Brush Turkeys (*Aepyodius arfakianus misolensis*). Walsrode also possesses the nominant, Arfak subspecies of this bizarre little megapode which has always been an extreme rarity in captivity. Along the path are several cages, one holding Goodfellow's Tree Kangaroos. Another held Black-headed Bulbuls (*Pycnonotus a. atriceps*), which I had not seen before. In another was the first Delacour's Fireback Pheasant I had seen. The Sumatran subspecies of the Fireback (*Lophura ignita macartneyi*) has always been extremely rare in U.S. collections, while the Malay and Bornean subspecies have been fairly widespread. The rufous-sided color phase, which was described as *L. i. delacouri*, by Delacour's Friend Professor Ghigi, before it was realized to be found in the same places as the other phases, is displayed at Walsrode.

An extensive row of landscaped outdoor aviaries near the front entrance is called the Pheasantry. I did see another subspecies of pheasant new to me: Jones' Silver Pheasant (*Lophura nycthemera jonesi*), from Thailand. However, my lasting impression of these aviaries was of another wonderful softbill collection. I've never understood why Piacpiacs (*Ptilostomus afer*) are so rare in captivity. These long-tailed African corvids are abundant in the wild, following domestic cattle. These were the first I'd seen. Simon Bruslund Jensen is especially fond of corvids, and was very proud of them. The only Greater Bird of Paradise in Europe was in full plumage, and displayed repeatedly while we watched. Very few specimens of this mauve-plumed species from the Aru Islands

and the Indonesian parts of New Guinea have been kept in U.S. zoos, in contrast to the Red, Raggi's, and Lesser Birds of Paradise. Other birds I particularly remember from the Pheasantry are Nocturnal Curassows, Black Francolins, Sulawesi Red-knobbed Hornbills, Crimson-rumped Toucanets, Black-necked Aracaris, and Madagascar Cuckoo Rollers (which I had earlier seen off-display).

A diversity of other outdoor enclosures are arranged throughout the park's 60 magnificently landscaped acres. (The botanical collection stands on its own merits. The rhododendrons are especially famous.) One of the two Red-billed Blue Magpies in a spacious aviary is a direct descendent of a bird that hatched in Simon Bruslund Jensen's aviaries when he was fourteen years old. Nearby are exhibited Keel-billed Toucans, Horned Guans,



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Greater Prairie Chickens, European Pygmy Owls, abnormally colored Carrion Crows, and the pale Koslov's subspecies of the Himalayan Snowcock. There is a row of tropical owl aviaries. The Ashy-faced Barn Owls (*Tyto glaucops*) were collected in the Dominican Republic by an expedition of the Brehm Foundation (the creation of Walsrode's long-time former owner and director, Wolf Brehm). Since the 1990's quite a few have been reared at Walsrode. Oriental Bay Owls have also been prolific. Other species include Milky Eagle Owls (whose chick we admired in the propagation center), Spectacled Owls, Javan Fishing Owls, and South-east Asian Brown Wood Owls (*Strix leptogrammica*), of which a specimen is featured in the educational flight show.

European Owls, other small raptors, and water birds are displayed in the "Owl Castle," a huge replica of a medieval fort, extremely popular with children. Barn Owls perch in the rafters above visitor's heads. Tawny Owls, Hawk Owls, Great Eagle Owls, and Great Gray Owls occupy wooded enclosures viewed from different levels. Lesser Kestrels (*Falco naumanni*) are one of the more threatened species of European Birds of Prey. The small group on display were the first I'd seen. A playful pair of ravens occupy a cage at the top of the battlements. European Glossy Ibises, Black-crowned Night herons, and Spoonbills are in an adjoining aviary.

Nearby are the Madagascar Sacred Ibises (*Threskiornis bernieri*), distinguished by their pearly eyes. The founders of the colony of more than twenty birds at Walsrode were sold by the kilo at a meat market. For years, every single chick of the last surviving colony had been collected as food. In recent years, education programs created by Walsrode have reversed this extermination, and young birds are finally enlarging the increasingly aged wild population.

Ten species of Ibis are kept at Walsrode, including flocks of Waldrapps, and their only close relative, the Southern Bald Ibis. A flock of around fifty Scarlet Ibises, and more than thirty Roseate Spoonbills are very noticeable in the enormous outdoor



View of the Tropenwaldhalle (Tropical Forest Hall) at Walsrode.

tors were warbling continuously, like budgies. A beautiful male Bullfinch was also singing away. There are around thirty Ruffs. A surprise was a Parasitic Jaeger (a small, long-tailed skua), sharing its aviary with Starlings.

Elsewhere there were Shoebills, a series of flightless bird enclosures where Darwin's Rheas and a spectacular Red-necked Single-wattled Cassowary can be seen, and large aviaries for birds of prey, among them a Harpy Eagle, Lammergeiers, Andean Condors, King Vultures, and Steller's Sea Eagles. Thirteen species of cranes, one of the most complete collections anywhere, can be found in various places. Simon Bruslund Jensen (2007) has written about the unforeseen mischief a pair of Siberian White Cranes can get into with the eggs of recently acquired Gray-headed and Mediterranean Gulls, from Tierpark Berlin.

One of the two birds inventoried as Herring Gulls for years has only been recently recognized as a Yellow-billed Gull (*Larus cachinnans*), an enigmatic bird from Southern Europe and other parts of the Mediterranean. It, and its more common-place companion live in one of a series of open aquatic exhibits, in a valley, near the tropical owls. Here also are the colony of almost forty Humboldt's Penguins, a Gannet, and northern ducks, among them King, Common, and Spectacled Eiders, Harlequins, and

walkthrough aviary, which also includes a famous beach with artificial waves, frequented by European Avocets and Oystercatchers, and a flock Inca Terns, to which visitors may toss mealworms sold in little cups. Less sociable towards visitors are Kori Bustards and Secretary birds, also at large in this great cage.

Walsrode holds eight species of storks, including a unique flock of Asian Open-billed Storks, in a large aviary with Green Peafowl. There are also African Openbills. The breeding group of European White Storks occupy a grassy meadow, above which wild White Storks and Grey Herons nest. This is not far from a terrace where native birds are displayed. I was delighted to see Yellowhammers and a Red-backed Shrike for the first time. The big flock of Rosy Pas-

Long-tails. There are 86 species (with no subspecies!) of ducks, geese, and swans, in various places. Many of the expected zoo and aviary species are to be met with, some in large numbers. Other rarities include South American Comb Ducks, Freckled Ducks, Blue-winged and (very aggressive) Andean Geese, Green Pygmy Geese, Madagascar Teal, Meller's Ducks, Red and New Zealand Shovelers, Baer's and Australian Pochards, and New Zealand Scaup. While Walsrode no longer maintains Lesser, James' or Andean Flamingos, the other three are well represented. There are nearly forty Caribbeans, around thirty Old World Greaters, and 70 Chileans.

A special feature of Walsrode's collection of aquatic birds are over seventy pelicans, representing five species. The largest component are more than thirty Chilean Pelicans, nonreleasable birds from a Chilean rehabilitation center. They have begun reproducing in earnest. Much larger, with colorful pouches, they are an interesting contrast to the three Cuban Brown Pelicans (with which they used to be considered conspecific). There are groups of Old World White and Dalmatian Pelicans. The group of eleven Australian Pelicans were especially majestic, with their crisp black and white pattern, and long pale pink bills. They are further distinguished by their dark eyes, surrounded by a fleshy ring (hence their German name—Spectacled Pelican). This flock was engaged in pursuing something or other in their small lake. It was a memorable first sighting for me, of a species that has not been exhibited in the U.S. for many years.

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### Erlebnis-Zoo Hannover

Despite our arriving late in the day, Carsten Zehrer, Biologist, took us on an informative tour of the Sambezi and gave us a general feel for the park. He also provided me with useful literature.

### Vogelpark Walsrode

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### References

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