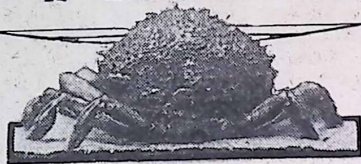


# ZOO "FILM STARS"



## AN ENTERTAINING ARTICLE

by LESLIE G. MAINLAND ("Uncle Leslie" of 2 L O)

IT is not the books which are the most fascinating part of the Zoo's library (though some might quarrel with this remark), but a stack of cases which look like cake-tins.

These hold the "volumes" which go to form the Zoological Society's "film library." This was started soon after the war, with some thousands of feet of films presented by Mr. F. Martin Duncan, who is the librarian, and it grows as interesting zoological events are recorded with the cinema camera. So, as rare creatures spend their often too short lives in the Gardens, a permanent record is obtained showing what they looked like, and illustrating their own special movements and habits. Some of the nearly extinct creatures may never reach the Zoo again, but after they have died out it will still be quite easy to "call up their ghosts" and make them walk in the darkness on the magical white screen.

Already it is possible to cause the ghost of the Ghost Fox to appear and pass before your eyes as he was in life, and *he* was believed to have been wiped out by cattle-ranchers until this one specimen turned up to prove that he still existed. The animal died after a few weeks, but the film had been made before his last illness. It shows this queer leggy creature in his most peculiar feeding position. He could not pick anything up from the floor of his cage without sprawling out his forelegs so as to bring his head nearer

the ground, a sequel to his short neck. (The Giraffe has to do much the same sort of thing, you may remember.)

### The Eight-Armed Death.

Some of the first films presented by Mr. Martin Duncan were taken by him at the Plymouth Marine Biological Laboratory, and show some of the habits of various queer sea creatures. You can see the Lesser Octopus assassinate a crab. It is a real creepy film drama, and the average cinema manager would love to describe it as "The Eight-Armed Death, a Tragedy of the Underseas Underworld." Even a coldly-scientific audience feels its "grip" (as they call it in the film world). You see the armour-plated victim in a glass tank awaiting his fate. As the film whirrs onwards the crab does nothing in particular, but you still have a feeling that *something* is going to happen, although there is no appropriate music to give you fair warning.

Then there is a shadow which turns out to be the assassin, who enters the scene *backwards*. (This is not done to make the crab think that he is going in the other direction, but because the water-valve used by the murderer to move himself from place to place is so fixed that it drives the body first with the arms streaming out behind.)

Next, the octopus opens out into a kind of deadly umbrella and sinks slowly down. Just before the "eight-armed death" settles

# SOME ANIMAL

# FILM ACTORS



THE OCTOPUS  
the "Eight-Armed Death"  
of a Film-Drama



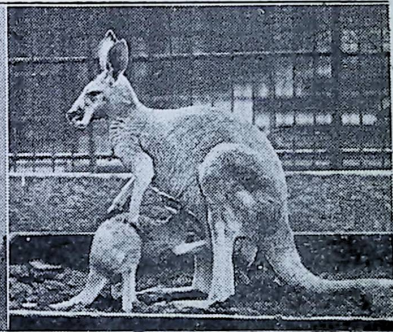
THE CRESTED  
PENGUIN



JOHN DANIEL,  
the famous Gorilla



THE GHOST FOX,  
an animal now believed to be extinct



A MOTHER KANGAROO  
photographed with her baby

upon the unlucky crab, you see one of the tentacles whip outwards and downwards until the tip slides under the edge of the victim's shell. There is a little flick, and the crab is lying on his back. Then the octopus does his murdering at his leisure. The crab is helpless, and in the centre of the attacker's arms is a horny beak which gets to work after some convulsive heaving and tightening of the suckered arms.

#### The Crab's Toilette.

A most beautiful film in the series shows the Spider Crab decking himself out after a fight. To disguise himself from his enemies this creature covers his shell with bits of any "sea vegetation" which may be growing anywhere near his home. If he lives in a seaweedy spot, he sticks little bits on his back and legs until he is more or less hidden. Should he dwell among sponges, then sponges are clearly the right thing to wear. Should he happen to be clothed in sea-weed when you place him in a world of sponges, he at once gets worried, throws away his old suit, and starts dressing himself in a new outfit. The picture shows a crab who lives in a seaweed forest. In a "scrap" with a friend some of his disguise has been torn off (just like a burglar who has lost a false beard while escaping). He is seen with bits of seaweed in his mouth, which he is gluing into the right places.

Then there is a film record of the Crested Penguins who came to the Zoo with their enormous appetites, lived there a little, and died. They were really great when faced with a few plump fresh herrings. They are smallish birds, but you can see one eat five fish, one after the other. Then there is a thoughtful moment. The spirit is willing, but the flesh has its limits. There is a very fine herring still waiting—you see it on the film—but is there any room for it? At last the penguin has a brain-wave. He breaks out into a comic little fumble-footed dance with the idea of shaking down the other five fish. After he has landed heavily on his heels six or seven times the impossible has been accomplished, and there is room for one more, after all.

#### Prawns at Football.

Another moving picture, of all things, shows a group of Prawns playing football. Into their glass tank some little bits of chopped fish are dropped, and these are used as the balls. A prawn is seen to swim up to one of these and "punt" it away with a fore-leg. Then another joins in the sport, and yet another, until the game becomes quite fast and furious. It is believed to be something very like playfulness, for the prawn, when hungry, can take its food in a very ordinary fashion, and there seems to be no other reason than sport for the game.

There is a very vivid record of a famous Zoo glutton in the collection of films—a Spanish Toad who, on his day, could gobble up seventy-five meal-worms at a sitting. He was a real film "star," for he had a fine gift of facial expression. You see him "registering" alertness, then there is the "got him" look, and at last there is the bloated leer of after-dinner self-satisfaction.

No camera has yet captured the actual movements of that toad's tongue in the act of feeding. You see him bend forward over a group of ten meal-worms, there is a kind of flash, "and then there are nine." Experiments with a "slow motion" camera taking 250 pictures a second failed to show what the tongue actually does; indeed, you only saw the tongue in four of the pictures, which means that the toad swallowed the worm in just under a sixtieth of a second. One day, it is hoped that the action of the tongue will be captured and the problem solved.

#### Microscopic Films.

Some of the Zoo's films have been taken under the microscope. One shows a "close-up" of the Star-fish using its little suckers as feet. It enables the creature to climb up a rock, or to murder an oyster by wrapping itself round the shell and then exerting that steady drag which overcomes the resistance of the victim until it opens to let in death.

Another film shows how the Hermit Crab goes "house-hunting." You see the evicted soft-bodied thing seeking shelter. Two whelk-shells are given him from which to choose, and he makes a very thorough inspection,

feeling inside them with his claws. Then he selects the bigger "house," and goes in tail first, feeling that he can now defy Fate.

#### Why the Keeper Stopped.

The boxing Kangaroo has been taken "in action," and you can admire the fine foot and tail work he uses when assaulting his keeper. During the bout when the picture was made the beast landed a beautifully-timed double kick on the man's waistcoat while the machine was running. There was some more film left, but the man very firmly stated that he would "let it go at that," and "call it a day." He did not appear to have the real spirit that makes our film heroes what they are. Still, has Mr. William Hart yet faced a kangaroo's kick?

The late lamented "John Daniel," the famous gorilla who died in America, has a splendid film recording his movements when feeding and playing. One section shows him drumming on his chest with open hands, the signal for battle among the full-grown males of his kind. When this fact was first mentioned by Du Chaillu, the old-time naturalist was laughed at, but long after his death he has been proved to have been right all the time.

#### Patience Pays.

There are many other wonderful things in the "cake-tins" at the Zoo, and the films are the result of a great deal of very patient work. The "stars" don't always pose in the best positions for being photographed, you know, and often the camera-man has to wait many hours until the "star" is showing that little peculiarity which the man with the cinematograph camera wants to put on record.

It is a wonderful library of films, and when our great-grandchildren ask our grand-children, "Daddy, what was a horse like?" they will, no doubt, be taken to the Zoo, where they will be able to see for themselves.

What a pity the dodo and the sabre-toothed tiger died out too soon!

THE END.

## Famous Fellows in Fiction



HARRY WHARTON

The fame of Wharton I extol,  
A great and gallant leader,  
Whose grit and courage thrill the soul  
Of every ANNUAL reader.  
In school and sport he stands supreme  
And wins our admiration;  
Of many a clever "stunt" and scheme  
He is the inspiration.

The founder of the Famous Five  
Is frank and fearless—very.  
In healthy sport he'll always strive  
With Nugent, Bull, and Cherry.  
He values all this loyal band,  
Especially the gay Bob;  
And he is proud to grasp the hand  
Of Hurree Singh, the Nabob.

Like every other fellow here  
He's had his share of troubles;  
His pluck has made them disappear  
And burst like airy bubbles.  
To shield the weak and face the strong  
Is Wharton's great ambition;  
He stands erect when things go wrong,  
And never makes submission.

Then give three cheers, and three times three  
For this fine son of Britain!  
A sportsman to the core is he,  
Long may his praise be written!  
Of schoolboys he's the reigning king,  
Far-famed in many nations;  
And Wharton's name and fame will ring  
Adown the generations!