



By Simon Bruslund Jensen

Above: Crested screamer (*Chauna torquata*). Photo: Klaas van der Hoek (NL)

The premier Birdpark in the world, the Vogelpark Walsrode, is getting all set for a new beginning in 2010. With the takeover by the Belgian company Floralux and its owners Kris Carrein and Geert Vermeersch in April 2009 the park was given a new future. Now the park will be setting new standards for bird-parks with this new époque.

The park will position the new beginning by demonstratively changing its name and logo. Weltvogelpark will be the new name; this German term means world-bird-park and is in many ways self explaining as to what this bird-park in Walsrode represents. "Bringing the world of birds, closer to us humans".

The branding process is well known for companies that reinvent themselves. It is important for any company to have a clear direction. This is important for the costumers but also for the staff that in essence produces the product that need attention. The Worldvogelpark is indeed a product well worth attention; it is an extraordinary and specialized zoological institution without a match.

"The park is not changing its direction, much more it is getting back on the right course"- Says General Director Geer Scheres.

The 2010 Season will start on March 18th with an ocean of flowers, the gardens of Weltvogelpark Walsrode are well known as some of the most wonderful and well kept anywhere in Europe. They change not only with the season but also with every change in blooming cycles of the different main groups of flowering plants.

Right: Spectacled Eider (*Somateria fischeri*) Photo: Klaas van der Hoek.

The Weltvogelpark is the place to go not just for those passionate about birds or gardens. It's also the place to spend a leisure day out with the family, German and international cuisine, play-grounds, commented feedings and educative flight-shows





serves for the entertainment all the while the world of the birds becomes more and more familiar.

Left: Hooded merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*). Photo: Klaas van der Hoek.

As a warm up for the coming breeding season we have a few news and highlights from the

previous season that has not yet been published.

The two most southerly distributed Pelican species are the Australian Pelican (*Pelecanus conspicillatus*) and the Peruvian Pelican (*Pelecanus thagu*). Thus their genetically hardwired breeding season falls during our cold season and the breeding occurs only in the wintering houses which consist of a heated green houses with a large pool. During the 2008/2009 season the Weltvogelpark reared 4 young Australian Pelicans and 9 Peruvian Pelicans which is a good result that strengthen both breeding groups for the future.

Right: Young Australian Pelican at three days of age.



Left: At just a few days old young Australian Pelican will start to feed by themselves from a small dish. At five weeks the Pelicans become playful and spend considerable time in playing with their food rather than eating it. Photos: Weltvogelpark Walsrode.

The 2009/2010 Season is still ongoing and the fresh eggs are carefully removed by the keepers Matthias-Malte Müller and Thomas Eichler who is also responsible for the important record keeping on which pair was

carrying for which egg and which birds pair together. Leaving the eggs with the parents is too hazardous as the life in the small breeding colony is very lively indeed. Meanwhile the first young Australian Pelican for 2010 has hatched in the hand-rearing station.

The Madagascar Pond Herons (*Ardeola idae*) reared their own young in 2009 in the community aviary for Madagascar mangrove birds which is located behind the owl-castle. Due to their secretive behavior one of the clutches was not detected until the chicks were almost ready for fledging. Madagascar pond herons are currently only maintained in captivity at the Weltvogelpark in Walsrode therefore the 5 offspring in 2009 plays an important role for maintaining a viable population of this endangered species. In the same aviary the equally rare Blue-eyed Sacred Ibis (*Threskiornis bernieri*) also reared a young.



The African Open-bill Storks (*Anastomus lamelligerus*) also occurs in the depleted mangrove forests of western Madagascar. Although the three species also nest together in the wild the Open-bill Storks are by far the most dominant and do cause disturbance for the ibises and herons in the aviary not least because they steal nest material from one another and the other species.

Left: Compared to other storks, the chicks of African Open-bill Stork is particular loud and active. Their quacking calls are very characteristic. Photo: Weltvogelpark Walsrode.

The Open-bill storks are diet-specialists that feed almost exclusively on large fresh-water snails that are most difficult to acquire in northern Germany and therefore the natural rearing succeeds

only on rare occasions in aviaries. Using commercially available digestive enzymes such as Creon and best quality day old rats we have managed to perfect the hand-rearing protocols. In 2009 the hand-rearing station managed to successfully rear 14 African Open-bill Storks an improvement of our own record from 2005 where we reared 7 chicks.

Right: With 24 days of age the young Madagascar Crested Ibis pays its name all credit. Photo: Weltvogelpark Walsrode.

With the two very rarely kept ibis species the Southern Bald Ibis (*Geronticus calvus*) and the Madagascar Crested Ibis (*Lophotibis cristata*), most of the eggs are removed for artificial incubation and hand-rearing. This is a safety precaution until the populations reaches a sufficient level to guarantee the viability. This way 8 Southern Bald Ibis and 10 Madagascar Crested Ibis could be reared in 2009.



In 2009 we had, as in previous years, good results with our Malagasy "Silky-Cuckoos" the Couas. Especially the Crested Coua (*Coua cristata*) is meanwhile quite well established. Since 2000 almost 80 chicks has hatched in Walsrode. Unfortunately in 2009 only the hand-rearing were successful. We lost a few juveniles, being reared by their parents, probably due to poor weather. The breeding cyclus of the Crested Couas are among the fastest for any bird species. The, up to two, chicks hatch after 13 days incubation and remain only for 11 days in the nest before they fledge.

Right: Young Couas in the hand-rearing station. In the front a Giant Coua (*Coua gigas*) and behind a Blue Coua (*Coua caerulea*). The distinct patterns in their gape is unique for the Couas as a family, each of the 12 different species have and specific pattern. The purposes of these are however largely unknown. Photo: Weltvogelpark Walsrode.



Below: The young Roadrunners are initially similar to the Couas, their husbandry needs is however considerably easier to fulfill. Photo: Weltvogelpark Walsrode.



With our Roadrunners (*Geococcyx californianus*) This season proved quite productive with 9 successfully reared Juveniles. The species is well numbered in European zoo's but still the population seems to be in trouble.

In the past few years Weltvogelpark Walsrode has been the only institution with any successful breeding results. Unfortunately almost the entire population seems to be very closely related to each other and inbreeding issues may be difficult to avoid in the future.

Right: Juvenile Spectacled Owl at 40 days of age. Photo: Weltvogelpark Walsrode.

In 2009 the rearing of Spectacled Owls (*Pulsatrix perspicillata*) succeeded for the first time in Walsrode. Two chicks of this remarkably colored owl species hatched and was reared in the hand-rearing station. Spectacled Owls are distributed in vast parts of South America and due to their large distribution they are not considered to be





endangered. However they are only found in places with a suitable forested habitat.

Left: Juvenile Spectacled Owl at 60 days of age. The Juvenile in this species demonstrates a plumage that is perhaps even more remarkable than that of the adults. Photo: Weltvogelpark Walsrode.

Surprisingly our pair of Red and Yellow Barbets (*Trachyphonus e. erythrocephalus*) produced two chicks only three months after they had initially

been introduced to each other. The two chicks turned to be males and were left with the parents and then assisted with the rearing of the successive clutch which turned out to be a female. By the time the nestlings develop their first feathers the gender is easily recognized as male if they develop a black throat patch.

The nest they selected was a burrow in an artificial sand-stone wall, intended for Bee-eaters with a door for nest inspections in the rear section. After the first nest inspections the pair decided to relocate the clutch towards the burrow entrance in such a way that that no further inspections were possible for the responsible keepers Juergen Vielguth and Kirstin Kirchhoeffel. To rear the young's they preferred Mealworms and soaked hill-mynah pellets.

Late 2008 we received a small group of Sudan Golden Sparrows (*Passer luteus*) consisting of just 5 birds, that started nest-building in the early spring of 2009. Due to skirmish within the group, at the time where the young of the first pair



were ready for fledging the young of the second pair were ejected from the nest, the day after hatching.

The four minuscule chicks were taken to the hand-rearing station and were successfully reared with surprisingly ease by our experienced team.

Above: Young Sudan Golden Sparrows being feed with a mealworm. Photo: Ingo Klinger.

The two pairs went on to rear another ten chicks during 2009 without further disputes. About six months after hatching the young Sudan Golden Sparrows molted into their first adult plumage. Interestingly two of the young that were

hand-reared successively started nest building and went on to egg-laying. They were not successful but thanks to the exact record keeping by our biologist Anne Hoppmann we can now tell at which age the young become sexually mature.



Left: A four day old Montezuma Oropendola. Note the pale bill markings that probably serve as orientation for the female in the dark and up to 1 meter deep hanging nests. This species will lay only one egg per clutch and the single chick is reared by the female alone. Photo: Weltvogelpark Walsrode.

Our small group of Montezuma Oropendolas (*Psarocolius montezuma*) is the only group in Europe. Another group is being maintained at the Bronx Zoo in New York. For this reason the breeding of this species is particularly important to us. In

Walsrode they are kept in the large free flight aviary together with Scarlet Ibis and Roseate Spoonbills among others. They build their impressive nests of fresh grass at the very top of the aviary and they lay only one egg. In 2008 and 2009 parent rearing were unsuccessful so we decided to try to hand-rear the young. The first challenge was however to retrieve the inaccessible eggs. A job not for colleagues with a fear of heights. We managed to secure two eggs. Unfortunately we lost one of the chicks but the other was, to our great joy, successfully reared.

For more up to date information do visit our website at www.weltvogelpark.de

Weltvogelpark Walsrode

Opening hours, daily 9.00 until 19.00 o'clock

Entrance day ticket:

Adults above 18 years: 16,00 €

Children 4-17 years: 11,00 €

Entrance family day tickets:

2 adults and 2 or more children:
48,00 €

1 adult and 2 or more children:
32,00 €

Entrance group day tickets (above 20 Persons):

Adults above 18 years: 13,00 €

Children 4-17 years: 9,00 €



**Above: Northern shoveler (*Anas clypeata*).
Photo Klaas van der Hoek.**

Note: The photos by Klaas van der Hoek were also taken in Vogelpark Walsrode.