

Don't play your radio at the Zoo

VISITORS who carry powerful little pocket radio sets into the London Zoo are creating a problem.

"This is something which we have never had to face up to before," an official told me. "Hitherto, it has always been the practice of our gatekeepers, on observing visitors with radios, gramophones, or other musical instruments to warn them that it is unlawful to play them in the grounds.

"Tiny transistor radios, of course, can easily be concealed in pockets or handbags, and brought out to operate only when the visitors are well inside the Gardens.

"The object no doubt is to test animal reactions to music—a fascinating subject for study, but plainly one in which we cannot permit the ordinary visitor to indulge. There is always the chance that some animal may panic and injure itself; and there is also the annoyance to other visitors. At the moment we are carefully watching the situation. We are naturally loth to prosecute offenders and it may be that a friendly warning from a keeper will be all that is needed to stop what plainly threatens to become a nuisance."

How to carry a tiger



Whipsnade's tigress Kaseh makes light work of moving one of her cubs to the right place—where mother wants him.

Marmots at work underground

SEVEN prairie marmots bought a few months ago have settled down well in an enclosure outside the South Mammal House. Sensing the approach of Autumn, they have dug several burrows, all leading to a big central chamber in which they will start to hibernate in October. The marmots not only drag down into their burrows endless pieces of dry grass and leaves for their Winter bedding, but anything else they can find, including a ball-point pen. It was the property of a

WHO'S WHO at the ZOO

visitor who rashly inserted it through the wire mesh with the intention of "tickling" one of the marmots in the "waistcoat."

Not in the mood to be tickled that day, the little animal gripped the pen with his teeth and took it below ground. Fortunately, the visitor took it all in good part. "Ah, well," said he, "I hope the little chap finds it useful to write his memoirs with, during hibernation!"

They will be "eating against time," trying to store up enough fat in their bodies to see them safely through the Winter months.

Kingfishers up from Surrey

THE Zoo's attempt to keep alive a family of young kingfishers found recently on a Surrey farm seems to be partially successful. Three of the fledglings have died, but the surviving four look very healthy and it is hoped that they will now be safely reared.

"These little birds were brought to us last month by Mr. R. W. Bunney, of Tilford, near Farnham," an official told me. "He had been operating a tractor when he accidentally exposed the nest. As it was fairly obvious that the immature chicks would now be deserted by their parents, Mr. Bunney took the family home with him and succeeded pretty well in getting them to feed from his fingers. Later, however, they became rather a burden, so he brought them to us.

"Since their arrival here we have been keeping this kingfisher family in a large cage in a service passage at the Bird House, where they have been fed not only on fish but also on meat and shrimps. The four survivors are now fully fledged and are just able to fly, so we are putting two in the British Birds' Aviary. The other two will have to be quartered elsewhere, for you cannot keep more than one pair of these birds in one aviary. They are very pugnacious and would fight."

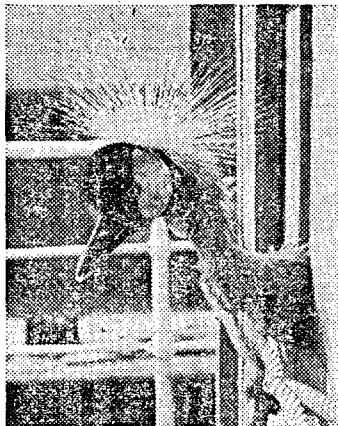
Big family of little snakes

AT the reptile house a three-foot Ribbon snake, one of a pair sent over by air from North America last May, has given birth to a large family. "There are at least 20 and very probably more," Overseer R. A. Lanworn told me. "Enumerating them is specially difficult, as the baby snakes are among a lot of mossy fibres, from which first one, then another, pops up, only to disappear almost immediately. The babies are only

about four inches long and look not unlike the earthworms on which we are feeding them. They are the first of their kind to be born here for some years."

Incidentally, these snake babies are causing their keepers some concern, because they are apt to mistake one of their brothers or sisters for an earthworm, and make a meal of it before they realise what they have done! "It is very probable that we shall lose a number of the babies in this way," said Mr. Lanworn. "But even so, we should be left with plenty of them to rear. We certainly want to rear some, as although the species is neither rare

Crane in a crate



A handsome crested crane from Mombasa made the sea voyage to London in a crate aboard a Union Castle liner.

nor valuable, the young snakes will be useful to send away to other zoos later, in exchange for other exhibits."

Three precious goslings

THREE valuable newly-hatched goslings are now running about at Leckford, Mr. Spedan Lewis's Hampshire estate near Stockbridge. They are Siberian red-breasted geese which were hatched in a large, electrically-controlled incubator. The goslings came in fact from eggs which were laid in a nest in the London Zoo's waterfowl enclosure.

Mr. John Yealland, the Zoo's curator of birds, told me that there were eight eggs in all, and as there seemed to be a risk of their being attacked by crows, or perhaps taken by other marauders, we sent the whole clutch to Leckford, where the manager, Mr. Terry-Jones, greatly experienced in the hatching of rare birds, has been giving them his constant attention. "The three goslings just hatched there," he went on, "will be sent back to us during the Autumn, when they will be able to meet their natural parents for the first time.

"These red-breasted geese breed normally in the estuaries of the great Siberian rivers that flow northward into the Arctic Ocean, and are among the best-looking of all the geese. We value our birds at £40 the pair."

Craven Hill

NOW FOR A GOOD VIEW OF SATURN

WITH the coming of the darker evenings the planet Saturn can now be seen to better advantage. It will be found almost due south and rather low in the

LOOKING AT THE SKY

southern sky, between eight and nine o'clock.

Saturn may be found quite easily, some way to the left of the much brighter planet Jupiter, and somewhat higher. It appears among the bright stars of Sagittarius, the Archer. At present Saturn is about 870 million miles away and is receding from us at an average rate of about 500,000 miles a week. But it is so far away that this will affect the planet's brilliance very little.

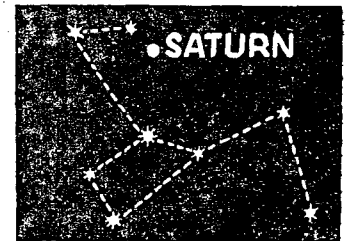
This wonderful world of Saturn presents one of the finest spectacles to be seen through an astronomical telescope. This is particularly the case just now because the angle at which Saturn's glorious ring system is presented to us shows the great sphere of the planet, with its immense belts of golden and leaden-hued cloud. When we remember that the sphere of Saturn takes up about 760 times more space than our Earth we realise how vast those flat concentric rings must be. In fact they have an overall diameter of about 171,000 miles.

The outer ring (A) averages rather more than 10,000 miles wide. Within this is another and much brighter ring (B). This is also flat and level with the other

ring (A) and it has an average width of nearly 16,000 miles. Thus three worlds the size of ours could find room to roll round it side by side like marbles.

But there is a great chasm between rings A and B. It is dark and about 3,000 miles wide.

Inside ring B is yet another ring, C. This is much less luminous and is separated from ring B by another dark chasm averaging about 1,000 miles wide. It is also semi-transparent so that the bright globe of Saturn can be seen through it. This spectacle remained for over two centuries a baffling mystery to astronomers. Every 15 years when the rings are seen on edge, the most power-



Saturn among the stars of Sagittarius

ful telescopes only reveal a straight line of faint spots of light. The discovery of this gave the clue to the remarkable structure of the rings and showed that they were composed of myriads of little "Moonlets". Most of these are very small and not more than five miles in diameter, while a few reach a width of 50 miles.

All this vast "host of Moonlets" speeds round Saturn in less than a day. G.F.M.

Keen rivalry in the race into space

Russian and American rocket scientists continue to make the whole world marvel.

America's latest triumph in space exploration is a balloon satellite called Echo 1 which is circling the Earth at a height of over 1,000 miles and a speed of 15,000 miles an hour. One hundred feet in diameter, the biggest satellite ever sent into space, it is made of aluminium-coated film, and is being used to relay radio messages from stations as far apart as California and New York.

A message from President Eisenhower was bounced back from it within a few hours of launching. Scientists believe that it may well pave the way for a system of satellites that would be like a girdle round the world for telephone and television communication, like the scheme referred to in the CN two weeks ago.

When launched by rocket at Cape Canaveral in Florida, the balloon was folded up in a small airtight container which was split open by explosive charges after reaching orbit. Exposed to the Sun, the balloon was then inflated by the special vapourising powders it carried.

Because Echo's orbit was calculated to keep it in continual sunlight for at least two weeks, it has been clearly visible as a shining orb in the night sky from many parts of the world, including Britain.

Meanwhile the Russians have gone one better. They have launched a space-ship containing two dogs and other living creatures, and have brought them all safely back to Earth. After the space-ship had circled the Earth 17 times at a height of about 200 miles, it was slowed down by its retro-rockets, fired in the opposite direction to which it was travelling. The space-ship's control system then brought it safely down within seven miles of the calculated landing-place.

The dogs Belka (Squirrel) and Strelka (Little Arrow) were photographed by television cameras while they were in orbit. On landing, they bounded out, full of life and none the worse for their 24-hour flight in space. The whole achievement has been hailed as a great triumph for the Russians. The day of man's first flight into space draws nearer.