

FROM THE EDITOR



HOW SICK CAN YOU GET?

First we have the sickening bashing of the elderly Greater Flamingo at the Adelaide Zoo, allegedly by a group of teenage boys, and now we hear of a boy in Wales confessing to deliberately trying to incinerate an eight year old girl's Budgie with a home-made flamethrower.

Evidently the fourteen year old boy was drunk when he crept into a neighbour's house in Brecon, South Wales and used a cigarette lighter to ignite a deodorant spray can to create a crude flamethrower with which to torch the bird.

The bird suffered singed feathers and damaged skin, but should make a full recovery.

When questioned by the local police the boy said he "did it for a laugh".

After admitting causing unnecessary suffering to the bird he was sentenced to the manifestly inadequate punishment of being banned from keeping a pet for twelve months, and having to pay \$80.00 in vet fees at a rate of \$5.00 per week deducted from his pocket money.

It's about time animal cruelty cases are treated with due seriousness by the courts, and the punishment be made to fit the crime. Surely a number of hours of community service in a veterinary clinic, where the plight of sick and injured animals might be brought home to the lout, should have been added to the penalty imposed.

Let's hope a more fitting penalty is imposed in the case of our poor old Greater Flamingo.

R. Chilton

Richard Chilton



FRONT COVER



The American Robin is a migratory songbird of the thrush family. It is widely distributed throughout North America, wintering south of Canada from Florida to central Mexico and along the Pacific Coast. It is most active during the day and gathers in large flocks at night. Its diet consists of invertebrates (such as beetle grubs and caterpillars), fruits and berries. It is one of the first bird species to lay eggs, beginning to breed shortly after returning to its summer range. The nest consists of long coarse grass, twigs, paper, and feathers, is smeared with mud and often cushioned with grass or other soft materials. It is one of the first birds to sing at dawn, its song consisting of several separate units that are repeated.

Adult American Robins are preyed upon by hawks, cats, and larger snakes, but when feeding in flocks they are vigilant and watch other birds for reaction to predators. Brood parasitism by the Brown-headed Cowbird, *Molothrus ater*, occurs, but is rarely successful because the Robins usually reject the cowbird eggs.

Photo: "Mdf"