BIAZA
BRITISH & IRISH ASSOCIATION OF ZOOS & AQUARIUMS

BROWSE
magazine

April 2025

MOTHING ELSE FOR IT
Preserving genes of the wildlife facing extinction.

MAKING WAVES
Aquariums join forces for ocean literacy

PLUS:
Zoo and Aquarium highlights | Q&A with BIAZA Woman of the Year | What's to come 2025

Welcome

Welcome to the second edition of BIAZA Browse.

We had a fantastic response to our first edition and I am delighted we can continue to tell the story of the zoo and aquarium sector through our magazine. This issue is even more packed with inspiring stories

I am particularly delighted that we can tell you more about our Great British Wildlife Restoration Award (page 4), which has been an initiative driven by the BIAZA Executive Office to highlight the work our members do in Britain to protect native wildlife, and make politicians aware of just how important our zoos and aquariums are for protecting biodiversity here.

As well as reflecting on what our members already done, there is so much more to look forward to in 2025. I am particularly excited about the BIAZA Annual Conference at Jimmy's Farm and Wildlife Park, our inaugural Scimitar Horned Oryx Day and starting to award accredited status to our members (page 6). The latter has been an enormous step forward for the zoo and aquarium sector in the UK and Ireland, demonstrating our members commitment to the highest standards in animal care, conservation, education and research. I hope you enjoy.

Dr Jo Judge,
CEO of BIAZA

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Editors: Maria Carbin, Andy Hall.
Thank you to all contributors. Want to contribute to the next issue? Email maria.carbin@biaza.org.uk Advertising is available to BIAZA corporate members.
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About the cover: Rare dark-bordered beauty moths were added to the RZSS Wildgenes biobank for the first time in 2024. Credit: Roy Leverton, Butterfly Conservation.
Right: Chester Zoo's Conservationists reintroducing one of world's rarest plants to Wales, winning the Great British Wildlife Restoration (see page 2; *Plant project wins top award*).

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Chester Zoo

The Headlines

Cornish kitten joins rewilding revolution

A nine-month-old female lynx at **Newquay Zoo** has become the UK's first zoo-bred cat to be selected as a potential candidate for the prestigious Linking Lynx programme, that may see the lynx released in the Carpathian mountains. For Newquay Zoo, which has bred several lynx cubs over the past decade, this collaboration between a small British zoo and a major European rewilding initiative is demonstrative of how local conservation centres can play a crucial role in international wildlife preservation efforts.

Dublin Zoo sign landmark agreement with Irish Government

Dublin Zoo and the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) have signed an agreement to formally collaborate on advancing native species conservation efforts in Ireland. The agreement was signed at the IUCN SSC Centre for Species Survival in Dublin Zoo. By partnering with Dublin Zoo and making use of the Zoo's incredible expertise and facilities, Irish Government hope to secure a future for Ireland's wildlife.

Giving a dam! Zoo at forefront of historic beaver release

In a milestone event for nature conservation, March saw National Trust release the first two pairs of Eurasian beavers to live in the wild in Purbeck, Dorset. This followed a February announcement by UK Government which has paved the way for wild beaver releases in England. These beavers recently left their facility at **Five Sisters Zoo** which has supported the release of hundreds of beavers through their expert veterinary care.

Plant project wins top award

Chester Zoo's rescue and reintroduction of the rare *cotoneaster cambricus* in Wales has won top prize at the Great British Wildlife Restoration. The botanical battle for this rare Welsh shrub captured the attention of politicians who voted for this extraordinary project as part of the competition. Read more about the Great British Wildlife Restoration on page 4.

Jimmy's Farm to host BIAZA Annual Conference

Tickets are on sale for the 2025 BIAZA Annual Conference, hosted at **Jimmy's Farm and Wildlife Park.** The Conference will include brilliant talks from communicating conservation to welfare developments and so much more. BIAZA looks forward to welcoming delegates from across the community and beyond!

Gearing up for a world first: Scimitar-Horned Oryx Day

BIAZA is getting ready for a huge first: a new world animal day initiated by the community.

As voted for during a bracket competition during Love Your Zoo 2024, the scimitar-horned oryx has earned itself a well-deserved day – to be celebrated for the first time on **August 16 2025.**

This species of oryx is a particularly special one, having been extinct-in-the-wild and later reintroduced thanks to enormous conservation efforts, including from BIAZA zoos.

Sophie Whitemore, Keeper at Marwell Wildlife and International Studbook Keeper for the Scimitar-horned Oryx, adds:

"At Marwell Wildlife, we are delighted to celebrate World Scimitar-horned Oryx Day, recognising this species' remarkable journey back from the brink of extinction. The recovery of the scimitar-horned oryx is a testament to the power of collaboration between zoos, conservation organisations, and field partners, demonstrating the critical role that zoos can play in reversing the decline of highly threatened species. This day is not only a celebration of the oryx itself but also an inspiring reminder of what can be achieved through dedicated conservation efforts."

Whether you house scimitar-horned oryxes or not, we hope you can join the occasion in marking the incredible conservation zoos can achieve.

#SHOTIME
AUGUST 16 2025

More information and resources can be found on the developing campaign page.

Project Highlight:

The Great British Wildlife Restoration

BIAZA's own Andy Hall explains how a light-hearted competition has become a political fixture...

Zoos and aquariums are inherently political. As organisations that care about animal welfare, conservation and education, as leading voices for nature, the zoo sector must engage with our politicians. Building confidence among zoos and aquariums to engage with politicians has been a mission of mine.

Many charities hold parliamentary receptions but we wanted to do something a bit different. When I came up with the idea of the Great British Wildlife Restoration we had no idea that this competition, part Bake-Off part Attenborough's Wild Isles, would work quite as well as it has.

In a nutshell the idea was to pit native species projects against one another in a light hearted competition for the attention of our politicians. This had several objectives. Chiefly, to raise the profile among politicians of the awesome work BIAZA zoos and aquariums are doing to protect our native species, to empower zoos and aquariums to engage with politicians, and to bring together the sector in a celebration of our hard work.

This is so important because politicians hold the future of the zoo sector in their hands.
By asking politicians, not just to turn up for a canape and a glass of wine, but to actively vote to support a project, we knew we were putting a big list of conservation projects in front of them. And we thought we could reach many more politicians this way then a regular event.

BIAZA has been blown away by the response from our members and from our politicians.

With the support of the Speaker of the House of Commons, we've reached a huge number through the competition and the award-reception.

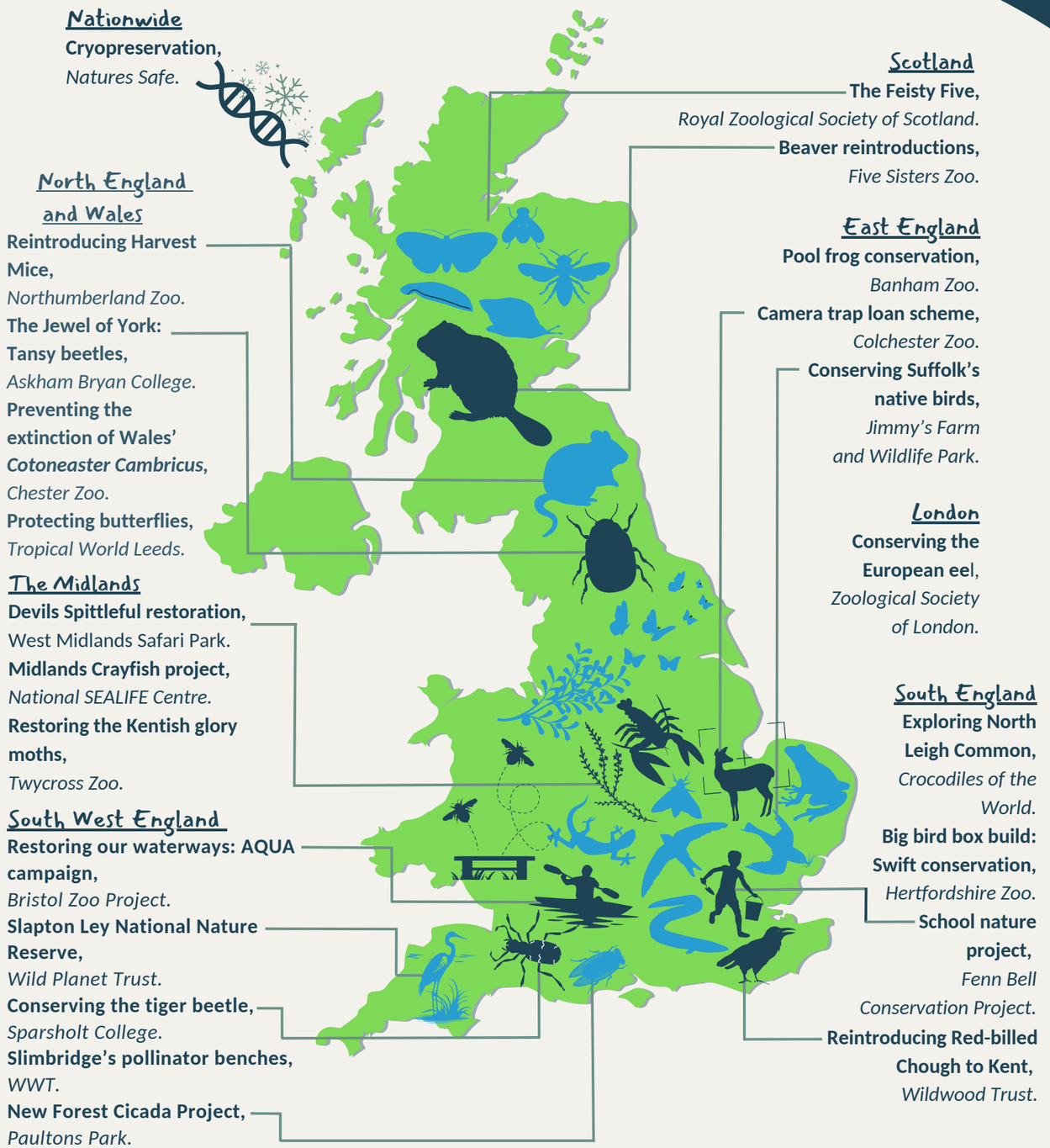
The focus on native species has had additional benefits. Safe to say most people associate zoos and aquariums with tigers, elephants and sharks rather than hoverflies, seagrass and red squirrels – something we are challenging through the Great British Wildlife Restoration.

It has also enabled us to engage other organisations in a way that wouldn't have been possible – in the parliamentary reception we've been joined by representatives of the National Trust, Wildlife Trusts, Natural England and other representatives of the environmental movement.

While there is more work to be done establishing the sector as a definitive voice for British nature, the Great British Wildlife Restoration has enabled us to demonstrate the incredible depth and breadth of expertise within in the zoo sector – opening up new partnerships and opportunities too!

So far projects reintroducing native oysters, by the Zoological Society of London, and rescuing Wales' *Cotoneaster Cambricus*, by Chester Zoo, have taken the top prizes in 2024 and 2025 respectively. Though the real winners here are our native wildlife and those organisations working to protect them.

BIAZA members can get in touch if they wish to discuss nominating a project for the Great British Wildlife Restoration 2025/6!



Map of the twenty-three projects entered in the Great British Wildlife Restoration Award 2024/5

BIAZA Accreditation Highlight:

Bristol Zoo Project's new Accolade from BIAZA

Bristol Zoo Project is one of the first zoos to become fully BIAZA Accredited.

This means Bristol Zoo Project has been recognised for its exemplary standards of animal welfare, conservation, education and research. The zoo, which is owned and run by conservation and education charity Bristol Zoological Society, was the first larger zoo to receive the accolade, which ranks it among the top zoos and aquariums in the country.

BIAZA Accreditation follows a rigorous process of screenings and visits by industry experts, questionnaires and documented evidence.

Assessors reviewed a range of areas of the zoo's work, from its standards of animal welfare to its education programme and sustainability strategy

Currently, 85% of animals at the zoo are both threatened and part of targeted conservation programmes. The Society's aim is for this to rise to 90% by 2035.

High standards of animal welfare were praised, along with the husbandry training the zoo's Animal and Veterinary teams undertake.

Furthermore, the Society's international conservation work showed significant efforts for both global and native UK species.

Bristol Zoo Project is currently undergoing a major transformation. Work is underway on an African Forest habitat, where the zoo's troop of Critically Endangered western lowland gorillas will be joined by Endangered cherry-crowned mangabey monkeys, for the first time in a UK zoo.

Brian Zimmerman, Director of Conservation and Science at Bristol Zoological Society, said: *"This accreditation is an incredible achievement for us as a conservation zoo and charity. It is only possible thanks to the tireless hard work, commitment and expertise of our talented teams, who strive to make Bristol Zoo Project the very best it can be.*

"We are extremely proud to be the first larger zoo to receive this award, as BIAZA's new accreditation programme is rolled out across the UK and Ireland. The process goes above and beyond the UK's standard zoo licensing inspections and marks the extra efforts of good zoos and aquariums in providing the very best in animal care, while recognising their work to create a better planet for animals and people.

European Brown Bear at Bristol Zoo Project. Photo: Laura Dunne.

Accreditation success:

Bristol Zoo Project is not the only BIAZA member to achieve accreditation, with recent success for **Noah's Ark Zoo Farm**, **WWT London**, **Tropical World** and **Sparsholt College**!

In this first full year of accreditation BIAZA hopes to screen 26 members.

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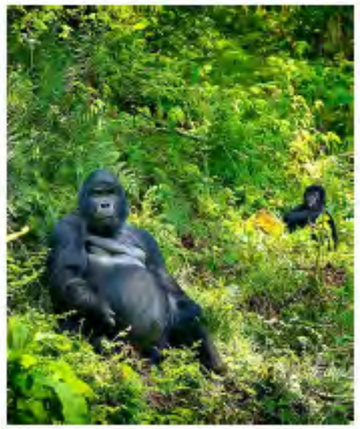

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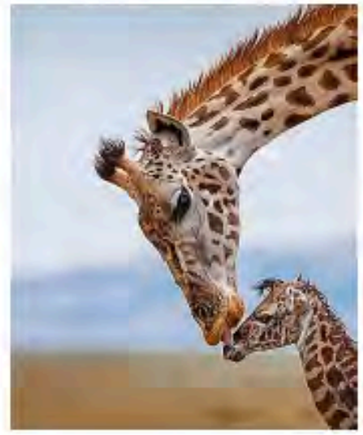

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Conservation and Research feature:

Zoological Biobanks: Securing Genetics now and for the Future

Nestled in the trees in a quiet corner of Edinburgh Zoo, the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland's (RZSS) WildGenes Biobank houses thousands of biological samples from zoos and aquariums across the UK.

Biobanks serve as a valuable resource for the zoo and research community, providing access to high-quality samples and safeguarding species' genetics for future conservation efforts.

Currently, there are four European biobank hubs. working in partnership with the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) Biobank.

As the UK hub, the RZSS's WildGenes Biobank regularly receives blood, tissue and hair samples, collected during routine veterinary procedures or post-mortems from participating EAZA and BIAZA members. Each Biobank hub uses standardised protocols to ensure that the highest quality samples are stored for genetic research.

Ultra-low temperature freezers are vital for maintaining the integrity of these specimens over long periods and ensuring the preservation of DNA, which can later be extracted and analysed to address important genetic questions that aid in species restoration and management.

Researchers can request access to samples for projects that support population management and conservation research, and are often linked to ex situ programmes.

A wide range of projects and species benefit from biobank samples, with ongoing research focussing on areas such as hybridisation, wildlife crime, population viability and animal health studies.

RZSS biobank samples are stored at ultra-low temperatures to preserve DNA.
Right: Using biobank samples, whole genome sequences have been generated for several endangered species, including Northern rockhopper penguins, Amur leopards, and rare dark-bordered beauty moths
Photos: RZSS

The RZSS WildGenes lab - a conservation genetics research facility, also based at Edinburgh Zoo – oversees a number of biobank projects. Recently, entire genome sequences from several threatened species, including the Endangered northern rockhopper penguin, Cuban crocodile and Amur leopard were generated using samples from the biobank.

This genetic information provides conservationists with a resource to better understand species' genetic diversity, population connectivity and inbreeding risks. Ultimately, this knowledge can be used to inform more effective conservation strategies and targeted management efforts to ensure that these species not only survive but thrive in the long term.

The RZSS WildGenes lab has also used biobank samples to address hybridisation in African penguins, with results feeding directly back into the ex situ programme to inform breeding management strategies.

The biobank inventory currently stands at over five thousand individual samples from more than five hundred species, boosted by large legacy collections donated by Paignton Zoo and ZSL. Bird and mammalian species make up the majority of samples in the biobank but there has been a recent and encouraging increase in the inclusion of samples from less well-represented taxonomic groups like reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates.

In fact, 2024 saw lots of new species added to the frozen collection, and was the biobanks biggest year for native invertebrate submissions, including white-clawed crayfish, dark-bordered beauty moth and blood-red longhorn beetle.

The broader the species diversity in the biobank, the greater its potential to support conservation efforts. Biobanks can also play a key role in linking in situ and ex situ conservation measures to support long-term species survival.

This aligns with the One Plan approach and reflects the growing recognition by the IUCN of biobanks as essential ex situ resources for securing genetic material and advancing conservation initiatives.

The RZSS WildGenes Biobank facility at Edinburgh Zoo

Recently, the EAZA Biobank 'super-submitters' were announced as ZSL, Wingham Wildlife Park and Edinburgh Zoo, recognising their significant contribution to the RZSS Biobank hub in 2024.

By participating in biobanking initiatives, zoos and aquariums can not only increase their current conservation impact but also help secure genetic diversity and resources for future species recovery efforts. In the face of global population declines, biobanking is now more important than ever.

The RZSS biobank would like to invite all BIAZA member institutions to collect samples and send them to the EAZA Biobank Hub at Edinburgh Zoo. By providing this free storage resource, together we can safeguard critical samples from the animals in our care.

Contact biobank@rzss.org.uk for more information on the sample submissions process.

Dr Cecilia Langhorne,
Senior Biobank Technician
RZSS WildGenes Biobank

Marketing Highlight:

Thriving in the Digital Age:
Why Zoos and Aquariums Must Adapt Now

Anthony Rawlins, CEO at Navigate

The landscape for zoos and aquariums is shifting fast. Costs are rising, conservation funding is tightening, and visitor numbers haven't fully bounced back. Meanwhile, digital entertainment giants like Netflix and Amazon are reshaping consumer habits and even moving into real-world experiences. Without adaptation, zoos and aquariums risk fading into the background.

But digital isn't the enemy, it's an opportunity. Zoos and aquariums that embrace digital/online engagement aren't just increasing ticket sales; they're growing memberships, driving donations, and deepening their impact on conservation.

The Reality: Consumer Spending Has Shifted
People are still willing to pay for meaningful experiences, but they're more selective. Beyoncé and Taylor Swift concerts sell out in minutes, with fans willing to pay thousands for an unforgettable night. Meanwhile, the average UK household spends less than £1 per week visiting wildlife attractions. This isn't just about cost, it's about *perceived* value. To compete, zoos and aquariums need to foster the same emotional connection as major events.

Digital Marketing: The David vs. Goliath Advantage
Digital marketing levels the playing field. While corporate giants can throw money at advertising, well-structured digital campaigns can deliver 20-40x returns even for smaller organisations.

To thrive, BIAZA members must:

Prioritise Digital Advertising
Digital should be the backbone of visitor growth. Allocating at least 50% of the marketing budget to digital is no longer optional, it's essential.

Use Data to Make Smarter Decisions
If you're not tracking ROI, you're missing out. Digital marketing should always be optimised to reach the right audience at the right time.

Invest in Expertise
Just as you hire specialists for animal care and conservation, you need digital marketing experts to drive sustainable visitor and donor growth.

Beyond Memberships: Digital Communities
Traditional memberships are declining whilst digital communities grow. Visitors want more than a discount card; they crave connection, behind-the-scenes access, and interactivity. Zoos and aquariums must evolve their engagement strategies to foster loyal online communities.

Monetising Engagement, Not Just Tickets
Relying solely on ticket sales leaves huge revenue on the table. Smart zoos and aquariums monetise their global audience beyond their visitors.

Potential revenue streams include:

- Premium digital content & live-streamed animal encounters
- Virtual tours & behind-the-scenes access
- Online retail & exclusive conservation merchandise
- Crowdfunding & digital-driven fundraising campaigns

There are destinations in the UK which monetise their content and make over £250k PA this way.

The Future Belongs to Those Who Adapt
The world has changed, and zoos and aquariums must change with it. Digital brands are already evolving into experience providers. The best way to compete? Embrace digital as much as you embrace real-world conservation.

This isn't about abandoning education or conservation; it's about amplifying your mission and making it more accessible than ever. Successful zoos and aquariums will be those that think like digital-first organisations while staying true to their purpose.

So the question is: are you ready to evolve?

Husbandry Highlight:

Anna Francis

Win for Rare Frog Care

Wingham Wildlife Park are celebrating a lemur leaf frog success.

It's been a rollercoaster few years for the Park's work with the lemur leaf frog (*Agalychnis lemur*).

Wingham Wildlife Park started with this species in late 2022 and shortly after, a bacterial infection swept through the group and quickly treated by their veterinarian, Georgia Wilcox. Her work with this treatment was shortlisted at the 2024 BIAZA awards.

At the end of 2024 they had made some major changes to the habitat, increasing biosecurity plus the layout and capacity of the frog room, allowing them to swap their population to one which is part of the EAZA Ex-Situ Programme's (EEP). The Park was proud to take on this responsibility with a new group of individuals from Bristol as the previous group went north to Manchester Museum.

They had not planned to breed this species quite so quickly but by making up new pairings under the guidance of the EEP, a change of scenery and a few very subtle changes in husbandry, they had eggs laid in two enclosures!

This is Wingham Wildlife Park's first amphibian breeding project. The team are delighted to have tadpoles grow and change before their eyes - with back legs now in place.

The team are already expecting to send some of these as far as Spain and Denmark as part of the EEP and hope to continue this success with this beautiful but underrepresented species.

Habitat highlight:

A Home fit for Hippos

Lord Bath put spades in the ground for a new complex at Longleat Safari Park.

With the aim to introduce a new breeding pod, Longleat may soon home a self-sustaining family group of hippos.

"As well as creating a new hippo house, we are also making improvements to the grazing paddock and Half Mile Pond itself. We're very excited to see the vision become reality." said Lord Bath.

"As well as being a tremendous opportunity for our visitors to see hippos, it is also an important chapter in our commitment to conservation, sustainability and education. Not only are we ensuring we are at the forefront of protecting vulnerable and rare species, but we are also using environmentally friendly practices with the build such as moving the earth to other parts of the safari park and a key part of the build is a classroom.

"My grandfather first brought hippos to Longleat in 1967 – a year after he opened the safari park which was the first to open outside of Africa; this is very much building on that legacy as we head into 2026 when we celebrate 60 years of that momentous occasion."

Longleat

Education Feature:

UNITING FOR OCEAN LITERACY

The increasing recognition for ocean literacy underpins the ambitions of BIAZA aquarium educators like Dr Noirin Burke (Galway Atlantaquaria), Jessica Briggs and Freyja Thomson-Alberts (Ocean Conservation Trust):

Whilst our forests may be the metaphorical lungs of the planet, the ocean and its connected fresh water are arguably the planet's heart, driving the distribution of water, temperature and nutrients that we all rely on around the world.

The declaration of the UN Ocean Decade underscores the relevance to all of us, with the statement that 'The ocean holds the keys to an equitable and sustainable planet.'

To collaborate their expertise and goals, BIAZA and EAZA educators came together at Chester Zoo in March 2025 for the EAZA Conservation Education Conference. The EAZA Academy course took place during the Conference (as a larger collaboration between EAZA and EU4Ocean) exploring how zoos and aquariums can be part of a global movement to restore society's relationship with the ocean.

A key takeaway from the session was just how interconnected humanity is with the ocean, regardless of our location.

Participants completed an e-course designed by consultant Ania Brown, before attending the one-day event with Dr Noirin Burke (Galway Atlantaquaria), Jessica Briggs and Frejya Thomson- Alberts (Ocean Conservation Trust).

Ocean literacy principles and dimensions were discussed, before attendees looked at how they could shape their own inclusive and accessible stories both for marine, freshwater and terrestrial focused species, exhibits and programmes.

Groups took part in creative storytelling, where they created and presented news bulletins about the impact of ocean threats on species and people.

In 2023, BIAZA Zoos and Aquariums provided 1.2 million education visits to learners of all ages.

Top: Jessica Briggs, Dr Noirin Burke and Freyja Thomas-Alberts at the EAZA Academy Workshop on Ocean Literacy.

Next they visited some of the exhibits within Chester Zoo, to see how an ocean literacy dimension could be integrated into them.

With more than thirty conservation educators from over ten European countries in attendance, the dialogues about connecting people to the waters around Europe were rich and varied.

Paula Calatrava, Head of Education and Social Impact Department in Atlantis Aquarium, Madrid, remarked; *"The online course was awesome and the workshop was fun and inspirational, and I discovered a lot of new people and perspectives."*

Sally Binding, EAZA Academy Manager said "EAZA Academy is very proud and excited to collaborate with the Ocean Conservation Trust and Galway Atlantaquaria on this workshop, contributing to raising the profile and knowledge surrounding Ocean Literacy."

Sally noted that while the workshop day is now over, EAZA hopes that the online course will continue to promote ocean literacy among the conservation education community as part of the EU4Ocean initiative, a project funded by the European Commission.

The course is open for BIAZA members to complete, and it is hoped that zoo and aquarium educators and staff will freely avail of it to further their ocean literacy journeys. The collection of signposting from the workshop will also be made available, enabling further exploration of ocean literacy concepts and initiatives.

Sharing of freshwater and ocean projects across BIAZA's networks is strongly encouraged. Aquarium-based members can also collaborate by joining the new BIAZA Aquarium Educators group.

"The Ocean Conservation Trust are proud to be part of the EU-funded ProBleu project, supporting educators to bring Ocean Literacy into school curricula and become European Blue Schools through project funding and provision of an online collection of educational resources that includes immersive virtual journeys and interactive data models.

As a conservation charity with an aquarium, we can be a bridge between our partners in academia and industry, and help make the goals of the Mission to Restore our Ocean and Waters a reality. We encourage fellow organisations to explore what opportunities there are for them through ProBleu and similar projects, like BlueLightS and SHORE."

- Jessica Briggs, on the opportunities working with schools on ocean literacy-related projects.

Participants share their thoughts on each of the seven ocean literacy principles. Moon Jellyfish: Ocean Conservation Trust
Blenny: Galway Atlantaquaria

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MASSIVE BIRTHDAY FOR A LITTLE ZOO

Golders Hill Park Zoo marks 120 years of inspiring a love of wildlife.

In 2025, Golders Hill Park Zoo marks its 120th anniversary, celebrating over a century of caring for animals in North-West London.

Since its founding in 1905, the Zoo has been home to a diverse collection of species, beginning with a herd of Red Deer donated to Golders Hill Park. Within a few years, emus, kangaroos, and even a black bear joined the growing menagerie. Over the years, the Zoo has welcomed a variety of fascinating species, including fallow deer, flamingos, ring-tailed coatis, ring-tailed lemurs, and more recently, Scottish wildcats.

Through two world wars and changes in management, the Zoo has endured, maintaining its commitment to wildlife and the community. Since 1989, the City of London Corporation has managed and funded Golders Hill Park and the Zoo, ensuring its continued success as a free, accessible space for all.

Generations of families have visited, learned from, and been inspired by the animals and dedicated keepers who provide expert care. The Zoo has also played a key role in supporting future conservationists, offering work experience, volunteer placements, and apprenticeships to aspiring zookeepers and vets.

As they look to the future, the team plans to refocus their efforts on telling the story of British wildlife.

Their goal is to become a home for historically native, currently native, and introduced species, educating visitors about the animals that once roamed Britain, those that remain, and the challenges they face.

They are committed to showcasing the vital work being carried out by zoos across the country and empowering people to take action in conserving these valuable species.

Golders Hill Park Zoo remains a place for discovery, education, and conservation—proudly serving the community for 120 years and beyond.

Original photographs of Golders Hill Park Zoo from 1905-1920

Q&A WITH ZOO VET: PHILLIPA DOBBS

We interviewed Phillipa Dobbs, Twycross Zoo vet and winner of the BIAZA Woman of the Year Award, announced on International Women's Day 2025

Tell us about yourself and how you came to be a vet for Twycross Zoo

I started my career in UK zoos in 2004 when I was fortunate enough to go to Paignton Zoo on work experience for two weeks and the vet Ghislaine Sayers offered me a part time position to stay on as an assistant in the veterinary department. I worked at Paignton Zoo from 2004-2007 both in the veterinary and animal departments whilst I studied for my first degree – BSc Animal Science at Plymouth University. In 2007 I relocated to London and did the 4-year BVetMed accelerated programme at the Royal Veterinary College and graduated in July 2011.

Phillipa was awarded BIAZA Woman of the Year 2025 thanks to her enormous dedication to the zoo community.

During my time at vet school, I was fortunate enough to volunteer at ZSL London Zoo and completed a three-week elective there in my final year. After graduation I took on a position in a small animal practice in Hertfordshire but after one year I relocated to the Midlands after my husband took a primate team leader job at Twycross Zoo. At the same time, the zoo was advertising for a veterinary surgeon position which I was lucky enough to be offered and started working as a full-time zoo veterinarian in September 2012.

In 2019 I attained the RCVS certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice (Zoological medicine) and in 2020 I became the Veterinary services manager and continue to do clinical work within this role at Twycross!

Could you explain any of the wider work you do for the sector?

Early on in my zoo vet career I took on the position of co-chair of the BIAZA Veterinary Focus Group and a few years later became the sole chair. Within this position I sit on the BIAZA Species Advisory Committee and provided veterinary advice to both the Committee and BIAZA members as needed. I am also the BIAZA Mammal Working Group Veterinary Advisor and recently took on the position of Veterinary Advisor to the BIAZA Primate Subgroup.

I am also keen to share my knowledge and experience gained from my work as a keeper and a zoo vet and I often present at BIAZA and veterinary conferences on a variety of topics!

I am an ambassador for ZIMS with Medical and have run four workshops training other zoo vets and zoo staff on the use of ZIMS with Medical in a zoo environment.

I am also the EAZA veterinary advisor for the Siamang EEP and Bush dog EEP and a member of the UK Zoo Vet Group Committee which runs an annual one-day CPD event for UK zoo vets.

Within my role at Twycross Zoo I have taught over 600 veterinary students during their clinical rotations at Twycross and enjoy showing them the role of a zoo vet. I am also the clinical lead for the Ape Heart Project which provides clinical advice on heart disease in great apes and a pathology service for apes that die within European zoos.

What has been the stand-out moment in your career?

There have been a few standout moments in my career so far, but the biggest clinical achievement has been the ability to improve animal welfare and veterinary care through positive reinforcement training.

I have worked with all the animal teams at Twycross who carry out the training of our zoo animals to improve their veterinary care. Some examples include annual influenza vaccination of all four great ape species, blood sampling of all the big cat species, rhinos and elephants and open wound management in many primate species.

From a personal development perspective my standout moment must be passing the European College of Zoological Medicine exam in April 2023. I became a resident alongside my normal role at Twycross Zoo in August 2018 and carried out a three-year residency completing case logs, case reports and placements.

Passing the exam alongside a few other zoo veterinary colleagues will be a moment in my career I will never forget, and I am proud to be a diplomate of the European college and an RCVS Specialist in zoo health management.

Do you have any examples of challenges you've overcome?

Since an early age I always wanted to be a vet but unfortunately my A level grades weren't high enough to go straight to vet school.

After taking some advice from an experienced vet who had a similar experience, I took the opportunity to study for a BSc degree first and then go to vet school.

At the time looking towards seven years at university was very daunting and expensive but now I look back and realise they were an amazing seven years that opened up the opportunity to work at Paignton Zoo which without this I may never have become a zoo vet!

Do you have advice for others who want to pursue a job as a zoo vet?

Working in a zoo is like working in an ultimate mixed veterinary practice. With so many different species and the challenges of their behaviour, anatomy, safety and enclosures you have to be great at problem solving, flexibility and team working. I always recommend veterinary students spend at least a couple of years in normal veterinary practice – ideally small animal with exotics or mixed practice to enable them to develop the day one skills needed to be a competent vet.

The zoo vet world is also a small community so attending zoo veterinary conferences to meet other zoo vets and become involved in the community is a great way to take a step forward to becoming a zoo vet.

Thank you! Any final thoughts to share with the BIAZA community?

The BIAZA community has always been welcoming and useful for me since I started in zoos 20 years ago.

I am extremely grateful for the opportunities that have been offered to me over the years and hope I can continue to support the wider zoo community and share my knowledge and experience further. I am very proud to have been chosen as the BIAZA Woman of the Year for 2025.

Phoebe barker | Dudley Zoo

BIAZA
BIRD WORKING GROUP

Care sheet highlight:

Goura crowned pigeons

BIAZA Members can Download here

WHAT'S ON: Q2 2025

Follow the links to find out more.

8 – 9 May	Managing Aquatic Species & Environments Chester Zoo
13 – 14 May	BIAZA Mammal Working Group Conference Hertfordshire Zoo | BIAZA Mammal Working Group
14 May	BIAZA Members Meeting 10am - 4pm | Paignton Zoo
20 May	BIAZA Members Meeting 10am - 4pm | Emerald Park
26 – 30 May	BIAZA Love Your Zoo / Love Your Aquarium 2025
3 – 5 June	BIAZA Bear Husbandry Workshop Peak Wildlife Park | BIAZA Bear Focus Group
17 – 19 June	BIAZA Annual Conference Jimmy's Farm and Wildlife Park

biaza.org.uk/events

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