



RESEARCH POLICY

The Research Policy of Shepreth Wildlife Park is based on guidelines published by the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA)

Mission Statement:

Shepreth Wildlife Park is committed to assist students in their research from undergraduate to postgraduate studies. Zoo research is imperative in improving captive animal management to best meet the behavioural, welfare, physical and health care needs of our animals, as well as benefiting captive breeding programmes both in captivity and in the wild.

Types of research:

Animal collections provide a huge resource for potential research, all of which can add new knowledge to our understanding of the biology of wild animals and their management in captivity. Examples of topics are:

- Captive-breeding programmes and zoo records.
- Nutrition and reproduction in different species.
- Veterinary and medical work, including analysis of post-mortem data.
- Use of post-mortem animal specimens for anatomical and taxonomic studies.
- Species studies and studies of behavioural changes owing to enrichment, social and environmental changes, or the effects of enclosure design on behaviour.
- Public/animal interactions.

Visitor Studies offer great potential and a range of topics, such as:

- Evaluation of interpretation, knowledge transfer and potential for behavioural change.
- Visitor behaviour.
- Visitor attitude.

Field conservation also involves research and the collection of data. Many zoos are involved with native species projects. Areas include:

- Native species research within own grounds.
- Native species research with other partners, such as Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Countryside Council for Wales.
- Field conservation research in other countries, often with other non-governmental partners, both local and other.
- Research into behaviour and ecology of wild animals.
- Human impacts and wildlife research.

So, you can see that zoos and aquariums offer exciting and challenging opportunities for a wide variety of potential research projects. Unfortunately, much of this potential is currently under-utilised, but this does mean that whatever project you do in the zoo, there is a strong likelihood you are investigating something which has not been studied before.

Selecting the right research project:

How can you narrow this wide range down to a particular topic that you would like to research?

If you are a student, then consulting your supervisor is an important first step, and you should discuss the project with your supervisor before completing our application form. We have a list of potential projects, or there may be suggested projects available from your supervisor.

Check carefully with your supervisor what your course requires with respect to the execution and write-up of the project, and whether these requirements can be fully met by the intended project. For example, are descriptive statistics adequate, or is statistical hypothesis testing a requirement? It may also be useful to browse through previous projects which have been undertaken with us.

When planning a project, it is important to have sufficient background knowledge to inform your research. There are many zoo-specific sources of information that are useful starting points, and use of peer-reviewed literature is also essential.

Zoo associations

BIAZA: British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquaria (www.biaza.org.uk)

The BIAZA website contains information on a range of topics such as animal care, education, legislation and conservation, plus links to other publications. The BIAZA Research Committee aims to promote the benefits of zoo research and to improve the quality of research in zoos in the UK and Ireland. The Research section of the website includes extensive advice for researchers, particularly where to find readily available information without contacting zoos. It is strongly recommended that anyone considering any form of zoo research should consult this website before starting.

EAZA: European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (www.eaza.net)

EAZA has a number of TAGs (Taxon Advisory Groups) which co-ordinate co-operative breeding programmes (EEPs and ESBs) within Europe, including the UK. The EAZA website will give you information on how this is done and for which species.

AZA: (American) Association of Zoos and Aquaria (www.aza.org).

Like EAZA, AZA has a number of TAGs which co-ordinate breeding programmes in North America. The AZA website contains lots of information on these breeding programmes and other aspects of animal care, conservation and education.

WAZA: World Association of Zoos and Aquaria (www.waza.org)

Although there are a small number of global studbooks (ISBs) this organisation's main role is not coordination of captive breeding, but rather raising standards of husbandry, education and conservation activity in zoos worldwide. It has published the World Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Strategy and has some useful conservation examples on its web site.

**If you wish to receive a list of our current research priorities, or discuss conducting your studies at Shepreth Wildlife Park please contact the Research Co-ordinator via email:
office@sheprethwildlifepark.co.uk**