



Bart Spanoghe

Bart Spanoghe is a professional occupational poultry veterinarian with a specialisation in veterinary food surveillance and Animal Welfare Officer.

Since his early childhood, he has been fascinated by nature, with a passion for reptiles and amphibians.

At 12, he became a member of the Youth Association for Nature and Environment, at 15 a member of Lacerta, the Dutch Society for Herpetology and Terrarium Science.

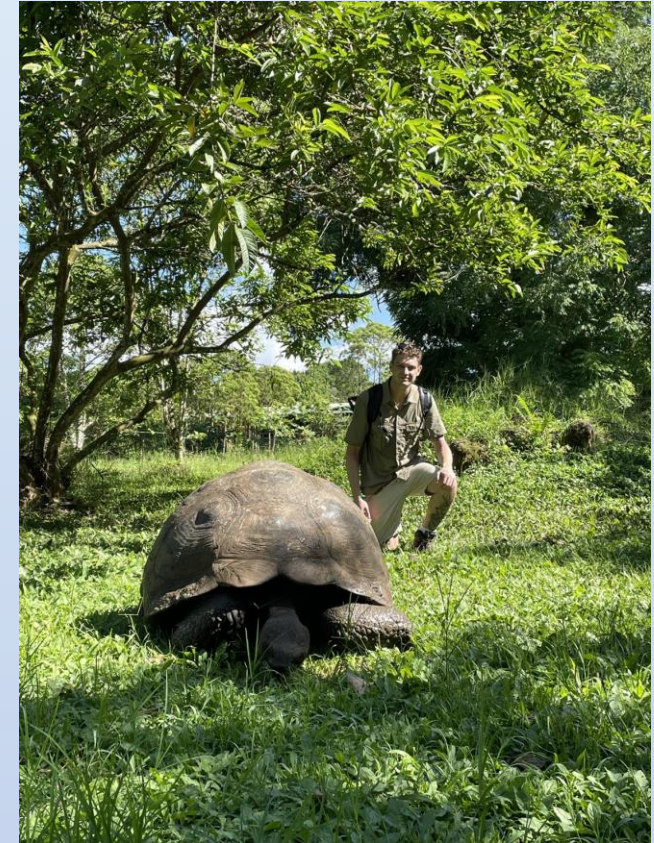
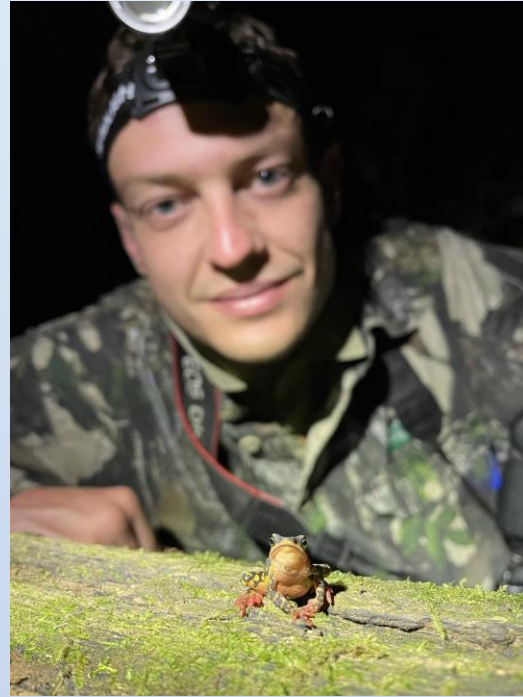
Afterwards, he became an active member of the Flemish Terrarium Society Terra VZW and the German Society for Herpetology and Terrarium Science.

Within the world of reptiles and amphibians, Bart's full attention goes to observing, keeping, and breeding with the different species of European lizards.

Bart has already published several articles and many photos about his experiences with these animals in indoor and outdoor terrariums in trade magazines and specialised websites.

By sharing his knowledge with like-minded people worldwide, he continues to build a network of serious enthusiasts who together, thanks to thorough field herpetology and terrarium science, take care of lizards and breed them successfully in captivity. In this way, wild capture is prevented and endangered species are conserved.

“15 Years of Successful Indoor and Outdoor Breeding of (South) European Lacertidae” + “Melanistic Eyed/Ocellated Lizards and Lizard Diseases”



Thomas Marriott is the Manager of Exotics Keeper Magazine and Executive Editor of the Responsible Herpetoculture Journal. He has travelled to dozens of countries finding and photographing reptiles and amphibians and sharing the stories of conservationists working with them in the field. Thomas has authored over 200 magazine articles and worked on several other projects including a documentary on New Caledonian Geckos and the EK Survey Report, aimed at capturing data on the UK reptile-keeping hobby.

“Integrating wild observations into captive care”



Dr Marie Kubiak

"Follicles! The silent killer..."

Marie graduated from Bristol University vet school, following placements within zoos and exotic animal practice. She spent two years working as a small animal and exotics vet in Kent, before undertaking a 3 year European College of Zoological Medicine residency. She has completed the RCVS certificate in Advanced Veterinary Practice with distinction in the Avian, Reptile, Wildlife and Zoo examinations and a credit in small pet mammals, and then the RCVS Diploma in Zoological Medicine. She gained RCVS Specialist status in 2015 and worked as a consultant for zoo collections across the UK until 2017, then took on a full time position as veterinary surgeon for West Midland Safari Park before returning to zoo and exotic animal private practice in 2020. Marie has worked with a number of large aquaria and holds the WAVMA certificate in Aquatic Species. In 2024 she opened Evolution Exotics Referrals, one of very few clinics across the UK providing 24/7 on site veterinary care by a multidisciplinary exotics Specialist, accepting complex case referrals in any exotic or zoo species from primary care vets.

She has authored over 50 peer-reviewed research and review papers and is the editor and primary author of "Handbook of Exotic Pet Medicine" published by Wiley-Blackwell in 2020 and is currently writing a new textbook on Zoological collection veterinary care.

Marie works closely with the police, animal welfare organisations and local authorities as an expert in exotic animal welfare, and organised crime relating to exotic animals. In her free time she runs a small holding, provides dart services to the police and veterinary professionals, and lectures to vets and nurses on exotic animal care.

Lori Torrini



Lori Torrini, CPDT-KA, AAB-UW, FFCP-TRAINER, AAS Zookeeping, is a professional animal trainer and behaviourist, applying behaviour science across all species to optimize wellbeing for animals under captive management, and improve safety and ease of care for their keepers. She holds the University of Washington's Certificate in Applied Animal Behavior and is a Fear Free Certified Practitioner, holding the veterinary, trainer, equine, and shelter certifications on Pet Behaviour and Well-being. Her work is focused on cooperative care and consent behaviours, positive reinforcement training, and using the least intrusive, most effective methods to provide customized care and training to reptiles, and other species, as individuals.

“Next level reptile behaviour and training “

‘Lori’s talk on foundation level reptile behaviour and training was very well received at the 2024 conference so we’re delighted to have Lori back for 2025 to share her experience further whilst developing and expanding the topic...’



Erin Rickman-Hills

“New and Future Research for Assessing the Impact of Care on the Behaviour and Welfare of Captive Reptiles”

The welfare of reptiles in captivity requires more information to provide scientifically informed care practices. Due to the new emergence of this field, the reptile-keeping community often lacks accurate and accessible information. This presentation will explore how emerging research into captive enclosure set-up reshapes our understanding of reptile care through enrichment and naturalistic environments, highlighting key findings from the University of Lincoln’s Cold-Blooded Cognition Lab in collaboration with Eckerd College’s Anglo-American Reptile Research Laboratory.

We will discuss cutting-edge studies in reptile behavior, cognition, and welfare, emphasizing their implications for practical husbandry. Particular focus will be given to how these findings evolved and offer actionable insights for improving reptile care. Additionally, we will outline promising new directions in reptile research, addressing critical knowledge gaps and their relevance to enhancing captive conditions.

Erin Rickman-Hills

Erin's journey began in the UK, where she achieved an FdSc in Animal Science through the University of Brighton, a top-up BSc (Hons) in Applied Animal Behaviour and Welfare from the Royal Agricultural University, and is currently completing her Ph.D in Animal Behaviour and Welfare at the University of Lincoln, focusing on Leopard Geckos. Although Erin's journey began in the UK, she now works as an Assistant Professor of Animal Studies focusing on Herpetology at Eckerd College in Florida, running her research lab, the Anglo-American Reptile Research Laboratory. The lab focuses on different keeping styles (with exploration into the welfare theories of bioactive environments) in a range of different reptiles, including Crested Geckos and Madagascar Day Geckos.

Erin has many scientific papers in preparation and in the process of publication that focus on enrichment styles for Leopard Geckos and supporting on similar research in Bearded Dragons. These papers include a range of cognitive and behavioral tests to explore welfare. She has recently published a paper on The impact of enriched housing on the behaviour and welfare of captive leopard geckos (*Eublepharis macularius*).

As of November 2024, Erin was invited and accepted a position to become a Trustee of the British Herpetological Society, one of the most historical and prestigious societies in the field of Herpetology.



“Is My Tortoise/Turtle Happy?”

Determining the emotional state in reptiles is a challenge, making this a difficult question to answer. Emotional well-being and mental health are, of course, linked to physical health. In a similar cycle to the chicken (or tortoise) and egg, physical well-being is essential before mental well-being can be achieved. This presentation examines the effects of emotional states on behaviour. Stress, anxiety and fear are all negative emotional states which have potentially harmful effects on health and welfare – how do we mitigate against them? How does emotional state impact on the ability to engage with the environment and to learn? What is the impact of emotional state on social interactions between Chelonians/Testudines (and reptiles as a whole)?

Jane Williams

Jane Williams completed her first degree in Zoology from the University of Nottingham, and has a Post Graduate Certificate in Education from the same institution. She has an MA in Education from the Open University. She completed the Post Graduate Diploma in Companion Animal Behaviour Counselling at the University of Southampton, and a research MSc at the same institution. Her research topic was the husbandry and care of captive Mediterranean tortoises in the UK.

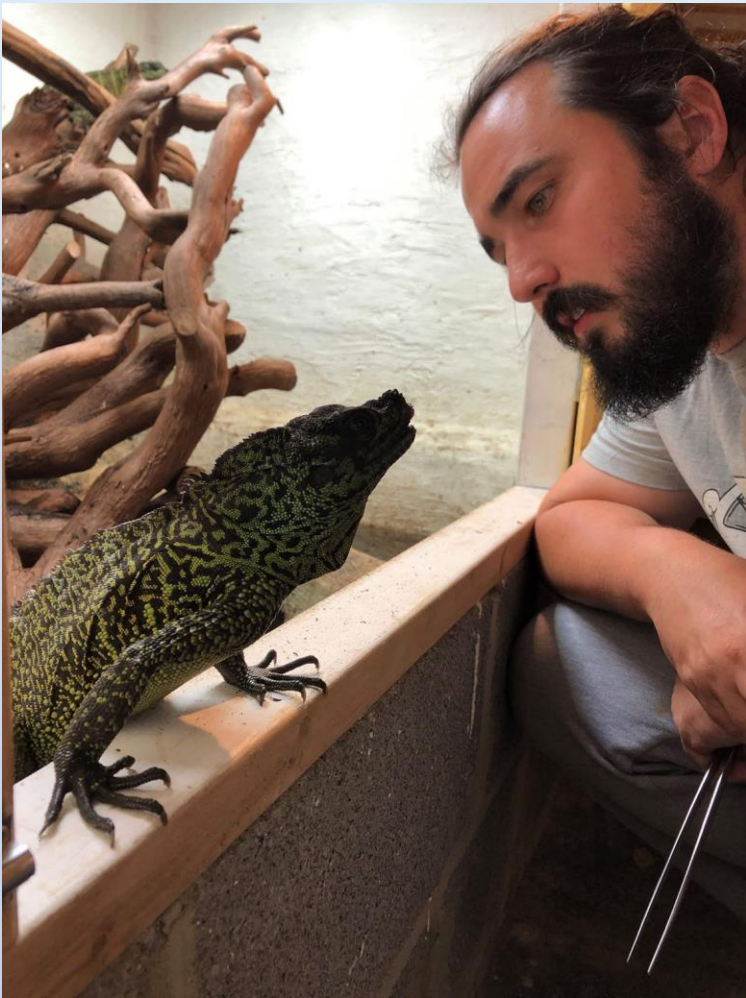
Jane is Animal Behaviour and Training Council (ABTC) Registered as a Clinical Animal Behaviourist, and an Animal Training Instructor. Jane was the ABTC Chair (2018–2020) and is currently a Trustee and its Secretary (2020–2024). She has been a full member of the Association of Pet Behaviour Counsellors since 2009, and was its Chair (2017–2020).

Jane has delivered Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for staff in veterinary practices and rescue centres and delivered seminars for owners, veterinary students (Royal Veterinary College), schools, HE and FE colleges, and rescue staff, on tortoise welfare and behaviour. She has presented at the British Veterinary Nursing Association (BVNA) and written articles on husbandry and reducing stress for reptiles during veterinary visits. She regularly presents at the European Turtle Alliance Conference.

Jane has a number of published articles in the field of reptile husbandry and welfare with a focus on tortoises. Her recently published book “Tortoise Husbandry and Welfare” is published by CABI, is widely available, and includes aspects of the topics in this presentation, plus much more. CABI digital library link:

<https://www.cabidigitallibrary.org/doi/book/10.1079/9781800623736.0000>

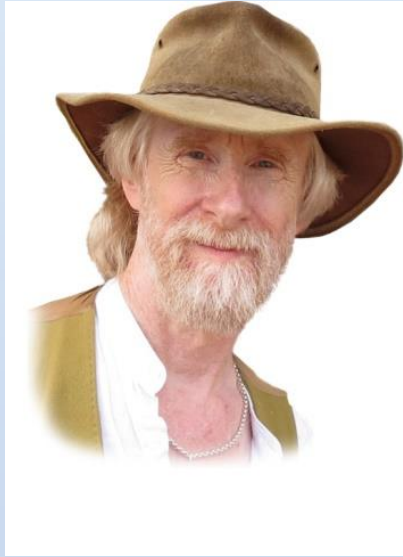
Jane lives in Essex, UK, with 35 tortoises, six dogs, five tarantulas and another equally animal-mad human.



Ben Owens

“The care, breeding and natural history of *Hydrosaurus spp* with observations from the wild”

Ben Owens is a PhD student in Bangor University, Wales studying the population genomics of isolated populations across fragmented habitats, particularly adders (*Vipera berus*) and sand lizards (*Lacerta agilis*) in the UK. He is also the director and founder of Captive & Field Herpetology - a peer-reviewed journal and leading company of research driven expeditions. His main research interests lie in population genomics, snakebite ecology, behavioural ecology and utilising herpetoculture within research. This has led to his current involvement in research in countries such as Morocco, Greece, India, and Southeast Asia, some of which will be included in his talk on sailfin dragons (*Hydrosaurus spp*). In the world of herpetoculture, he manages a collection of over 80 species and 200 individuals with a focus primarily on Asian Agamids and Amazon puffing snakes (*Spilotes sulphureus*).



Mark will be our after dinner speaker
On Saturday evening, giving his talk
"Blood, Sweat and Snakebites, the makings of a herpetologist" which tells the story of his career from snake enthusiast to snake scientist.....not to be missed!

Professor Mark O'Shea MBE

Mark is perhaps one of our most well-known British herpetologists – as an author, lecturer, and television personality. He is known internationally as the presenter of the Animal Planet/Discovery Channel series O'Shea's Big Adventure. Mark has participated in over 60 herpetological expeditions to almost 40 countries, on six continents, since the early 1980s. He was first author on the descriptions of four new Papuan and Timorese snakes, and a co-author describing seven other snakes and a gecko, from New Guinea, Timor, Java and Borneo, with more new species to come. He has worked on a number of snakebite projects, in Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka and Myanmar, capturing and milking medically important venomous snakes, working with clinicians from the UK and Australia. He has authored and co-authored numerous herpetological books, some of which he'll be selling at the conference!

Grainne Hartigan, Nature's SAFE



“The Cool Future of Herpetological Conservation”

Cryopreservation has become an essential tool for safeguarding the future of endangered species, but when it comes to ectotherms—reptiles, amphibians, fish, and invertebrates—this technique presents unique challenges. While cryopreservation methods for mammals have been refined using established human, equine and domestic mammal protocols, ectotherms possess distinct biological traits that require specialized approaches

Grainne Hartigan

Grainne Hartigan is the Zoo Liaison and Charity Administrator at Nature's SAFE, Europe's first charitable living biobank, where she works to build collaborative relationships within the zoo and scientific community to support the charity's mission of preserving genetic diversity and Saving Animals From Extinction. With a background in Zoology and Education, she has close to 20 years of experience in the teaching of animal management and conservation, as well as practical experience with animal husbandry and wildlife monitoring.

Grainne's career has included a range of zoo based and animal management roles including Learning Manager at Marwell Zoo and, Animal Practitioner at Coleg Cambria, as well as more advisory positions such as supporting to the development of the Animal Management T-level for the UK Department for Education. She has also participated in species monitoring and conservation projects both in the UK and internationally, gaining firsthand experience with the critical threats facing biodiversity.

Currently pursuing a Master's in Animal Behaviour, Grainne is passionate about inspiring others to protect the natural world. Her talk, "The Cool Future of Herpetological Conservation", will delve into innovative cryopreservation techniques being developed at Nature's SAFE to preserving reptiles and amphibians for generations to come.

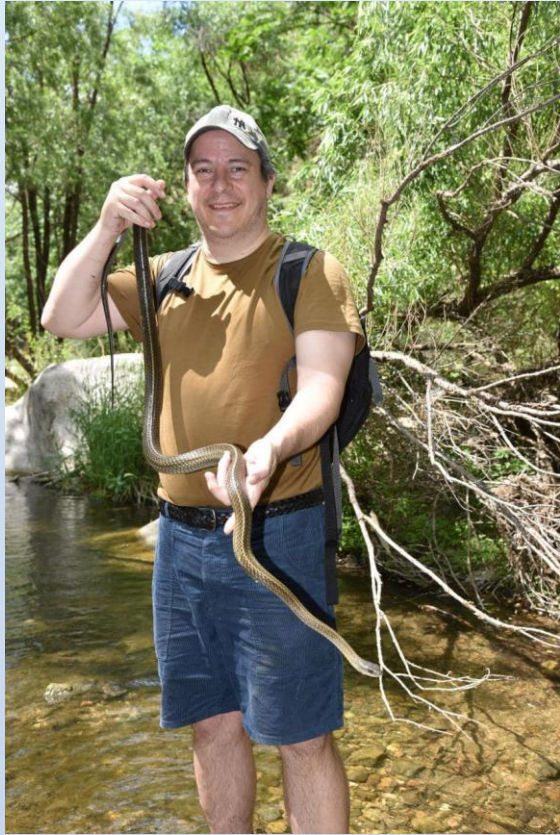


Chas Thompson of REPTA

“REPTA Update”

Charles (Chaz) Thompson Chaz is owner of Snakes ‘N’ Adders reptile centre a nationally recognised store that has been under Chaz’s ownership for the last 22 years. In a career with reptiles spanning 34 years Chaz has kept thousands of animals and helped to develop many keeper’s skillsets over the decades.

Chaz is passionate about children having an access route into this hobby and advocates for their right to own companion reptiles. Chaz is now a lobbyist for the reptile industry working closely with figure heads within the sector and developing connections with government organisations such as DEFRA, CITES, JNCC and APHA. Chaz is trade delegate for REPTA and its representative in stakeholder groups such as the Companion Animal Sector Council (CASC) and CITES Sustainable User Group (CSUG)



Francis Cosquiere “Acclimating New Reptiles”

Francis Cosquiere started keeping reptiles and amphibians in the 1980s and maintains a large and diverse private collection of weird and wonderful species, in particular Colubrid snakes, although he has kept, as he says, "a little bit of everything". Coming from a scientific background, he has been actively involved in the online hobby for over two decades, with a particular focus on countering misinformation and all-pervasive hobby myths with evidence, common sense and scientific fact, as well as helping out newer keepers with various aspects of reptile keeping. This led to him co-founding the Advancing Herpetological Husbandry group in 2015, with the goal of promoting best care rather than basic care.



“ Have I got Newts for you...adventures with *Neurergus kaiseri*”

‘One of the early members of the AHH team, Paul Tapley has been keeping animals for so long that he really should be better at it, or at least not constantly honing techniques that involve keeping inexpensive animals in expensive ways.

Paul will be fighting his imposter syndrome to take a lighthearted but informative look at some of the challenges involved in keeping and breeding the Luristan newt (*Neurergus kaiseri*)’



“Reptile Conservation – Uncovering the Secrets Behind Breeding Challenges “

Kieran will look at ex-situ breeding challenges, linking to sustainability and in-situ research , with a focus on *Boana picturata*, *Prhynoides asper*, *Uroplatus henkelii* and *Calumma parsonii*

Kieran Richardson is the Animal Technical Support Officer for the Ectotherms department at Chester Zoo. He has an MSc in Conservation Biology from the Durrell Institute of Conservation & Ecology (DICE) at the University of Kent.

He has a lifelong interest in herpetology, having grown up in a house full of reptiles, as well as interests in other taxa such as invertebrates, fungi, birds, and general ecology, particularly in unusual ecological interactions between species.

In his role at Chester, he contributes the many of the department’s conservation projects, including projects with a range of threatened amphibian & reptile taxa. He also coordinates the EEP (EAZA *Ex-Situ* Programme) for the mountain chicken frog.