



AHH | BHS Conference 2024 at Drayton Manor Resort

"Food for Thought!"

Saturday March 16th
- Sunday March 17th 2024



Welcome to our Conference!

WELCOME TO OUR CONFERENCE!



The British Herpetological Society is one of the world's oldest and largest UK Herpetological Societies. Founded in 1947 by Britain's leading herpetologists, the Society still enjoys its national learned status and celebrated its 75th Anniversary in 2022.

As well as organising this Annual Conference in partnership with the Advancing Herpetological Husbandry group, we hold several Members' Meetings with scientific programmes each year at various locations within the UK. We publish a regular ebulletin, the Natterjack, and two major publications, the quarterly Herpetological Bulletin and Herpetological Journal.

The Bulletin includes natural history notes, book reviews, and other items with emphasis on natural history, conservation and captive care including breeding, husbandry, veterinary, and behavioural aspects.

The Society's Herpetological Journal is ranked as one of the leading peer reviewed scientific publications devoted to herpetology. The Society actively supports conservation, research, education and responsible captive breeding. Why not join the Society today? You'll find more details on our display table – or visit our website: www.thebhs.org. Or use this QR Code right now!

Also on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BritishHerpSociety>



Advancing Herpetological Husbandry is an internet-based group with over 38,500 members worldwide. Established in 2015 in the UK, the group is dedicated to promoting the very best standards of husbandry for reptiles and amphibians. Our goals:

1. To promote "best care" rather than "basic care."
2. Tackling the all-pervasive myths of reptile husbandry using research and science, not anecdote and assumption.
3. Promoting the use of new technologies where applicable, and the use of existing technologies where it has been proven to be beneficial to animals.

The Events Page and main Discussion Forum are on Facebook, at <https://www.facebook.com/AHHEvent> and <https://www.facebook.com/groups/AdvancingHerpHusbandry> with a series of affiliated groups including **Reptile Lighting** at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ReptileLighting> ; bearded dragon owners' group "**How Not to Slay the Dragon**" <https://www.facebook.com/groups/830707307371341> and the royal python owners' group "**Not just a Pet Rock**": <https://www.facebook.com/groups/142173286457639>

The first AHH/BHS Conference was held at Drayton Manor in 2017. They've been wonderful hosts ever since, and our Conference has got bigger and better every year! Enjoy...

Advancing Herpetological Husbandry and British Herpetological Society
CONFERENCE 2024: "Food for Thought!"

PROGRAMME: SATURDAY 16th MARCH 2024

8:00 – 9:00 Registration

9:00 – 10:50 MORNING SESSION 1

Chris Mitchell *Welcome and Introduction*

Lori Torrini *(Live via Zoom from the USA) "Reptile Behaviour and Training"*

Eleanor Tirtasana Chubb *"Developments in Chelonia Diets"*

10:50 – 11:15 Break : Stalls open

11:15 – 13:15 MORNING SESSION 2

Louise Jakobsen *" 'Eat up your greens!' ... Browse and its Benefits "*

Keynote Speaker: Jerry Fife *"The Galapagos Islands and Breeding Galapagos tortoises"*

*An introduction to our **Students' Presentations***

13:15 – 14:30 Lunch : Students' Poster Session; Stalls open

14:30 – 15:50 AFTERNOON SESSION 1

Ben Tapley *" 'The Secret Life of Reptiles and Amphibians ' ...Something's new at ZSL!"*

Chris Mitchell *"Zoos and how they work – insider knowledge for private keepers "*

15:50 – 16:20 Break : Stalls open

16:20 – 17:00 AFTERNOON SESSION 2

Oliver Witte *"Expertise training for animal owners, using the example of the DGHT"*

17:15 – 18:15 Zoo Visit – with an introduction by Chris Mitchell, Head of Zoo Operations

19:00 for 19:30 Conference Dinner

After Dinner Speaker: Jerry Fife *"Breeding Cyclura and the Search for the Giant Leopard Tortoise"*



Advancing Herpetological Husbandry and British Herpetological Society
CONFERENCE 2024: "Food for Thought!"

PROGRAMME: SUNDAY 17th MARCH 2024

8:30 – 9:15 Registration

9:15 – 10:35 MORNING SESSION 1

Frazer McDade *"Mixed Species Exhibits: Getting Them to Work for You"*

Mary Pinborough *"Too much Food for Thought? Obesity in captive reptiles"*

10:35 – 11:00 Break : Stalls open

11:00 – 13:00 MORNING SESSION 2

Ross Hickles *"The London Zoo Livefood Project"*

Erin Rickman *"The impact of enriched housing on the cognition, behaviour
and welfare of reptiles"*

Tony Wigley (video) *"Setting the record straight - refuting anti-keeping propaganda"*

PANEL DISCUSSION: *"The Legislative Landscape- Black, White or Grey?"*

13:00 – 14:15 Lunch : Stalls open

14:15 – 15:35 AFTERNOON SESSION 1

Roman Astheimer *"Captive Husbandry of the Green Tree Monitor, Varanus prasinus"*

Eve Carter *"Feeder insects and gut loading: a comparison of diets and nutritional impacts"*

15:35 – 16:00 Break : Stalls open

16:00 – 17:00 AFTERNOON SESSION 2

Francis Cosquiere *"You are what you eat - Novel feeding techniques for snakes"*

17:00 Close of Conference



Meet our Speakers!

Keynote Speaker: Jerry D. Fife



Jerry resides in Phoenix, Arizona where he breeds a wide variety of rare tortoise and lizard species. He is one of the few private breeders of Galapagos tortoises. Jerry was a board member of the Turtle and Tortoise Preservation Group and has travelled to see many of these species in the wild. His numerous publications include 'A Pictorial Guide to Iguanas of the World and Their Care in Captivity', and books on the natural history, captive care and breeding of Star Tortoises, Leopard Tortoises and Russian Tortoises. He also writes for several reptile keeping magazines and is a popular speaker at international herpetological events. Jerry's presentations are entitled: "[The Galapagos Islands and Breeding Galapagos tortoises](#)" and "[Breeding Cyclura and the Search for the Giant Leopard Tortoise](#)"

Chris Mitchell

Chris Mitchell, Head of Zoo Operations at Drayton Manor Resort, needs no introduction as he has been a great supporter of our Conference team since the very first one, held in 2017. His presentation "[How do zoos really work?](#)" will consider the vital issues facing zoos and private keepers today. What are the legal, operational and ethical factors that lie behind how zoos function? Many private keepers excel at keeping and breeding a range of animals that may not be widely held in zoos. Zoos on the other hand may keep larger or perhaps rarer species than many private keepers. Some zoos have extensive conservation portfolios relating to reptiles and amphibians or their habitats. Many will participate in coordinated breeding programmes designed to maintain genetically healthy insurance populations of animals should the worst happen. Both private and professional herpetoculturists are enhanced stakeholders in the conservation of threatened reptiles and amphibians. In our hands is the capability to harm wild populations of threatened species ...but also the ability to save species from extinction as well. Which will it be?



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. Lori will be giving her presentation "[Reptile Behaviour and Training](#)" via a live link from her home in Colorado, on the first morning of our Conference.





Eleanor Chubb

Eleanor Tirtasana Chubb has been involved in Chelonian conservation and welfare for over 20 years. She was invited onto the European Turtle Alliance committee by co-founder Henk Zwartepoorte in 2012. She has chaired ETA since 2016 with the aim of building a turtle conservation movement in Europe. Eleanor is the founder of Tortoise Welfare UK and runs a variety of Chelonian education programmes across the British community. Her presentation today is entitled "[Developments in Chelonia Diets](#)".



Louise Jakobsen

Louise Jakobsen, from ZSL London Zoo, has worked as an animal professional since 1999 in both the agricultural industry, at husbandry research facilities and for the past 19 years, in mainstream zoos. She has had the privilege of having worked with a vast variety of animal taxa through the years. In 2016, Louise founded the non-profit initiative 'Browse Poster', which became a registered charity in England & Wales a couple of years later. Through the years, the BIAZA certified posters and booklets have helped keepers across the UK and Europe identify suitable plant material for safe feeding of animals, whilst raising money for wildlife and habitat conservation. In 2023, Louise stepped away from the animal keeping and entered a permanent new role as the Browse Management Officer at Zoological Society of London. She is also Chair of the BIAZA Giraffe Focus Group. Louise is very passionate about raising awareness for the importance of browse provision and insight to plant toxicity. Her presentation is entitled "[Eat Up Your Greens! ... Browse and its Benefits!](#)"



Dr. Benjamin Tapley

Dr. Benjamin Tapley is the Curator of Reptiles and Amphibians at the Zoological Society of London. Ben studied Conservation Biology at the University of Surrey, Roehampton and went on to undertake an MSc in Conservation Biology and PhD in Biodiversity Management at the Durrell Institute for Conservation and Ecology. Ben's work focuses on Evolutionarily Distinct and Globally Endangered (EDGE) species, conservation breeding and captive management of amphibians and reptiles, and conservation prioritisation. As well as curating the reptiles and amphibians at ZSL, Ben is actively involved / leading on several amphibian and reptile conservation programmes including Chinese giant salamanders, mountain chicken frogs, and megophryid frogs and big-headed turtles. Ben is a Co-chair of the IUCN Amphibian Specialist Group, Conservation Breeding Working Group and Vice-chair of the EAZA Amphibian Taxon Advisory Group. This year we are excited to welcome Ben to our conference to introduce us to the new ZSL London Zoo Reptile and Amphibian House: "[The Secret Life of Reptiles and Amphibians](#)"!

Oliver Witte

Training for reptile owners? It's well organised in Germany. But could we do it here? Oliver Witte is managing director of VDA-DGHT Sachkunde GbR (expertise training for Herpetoculture) and, since the end of 2023, co-opted vice president (Herpetoculture section) of the German Society for Herpetology and Herpetoculture (DGHT). He has also been working as the association's legal advisor since 2018. Those attending our conference in 2022 will remember Oliver's excellent presentation on the Citizen Conservation Initiative. At present, Oliver's work focuses on the development of training courses and the training of expert examiners. He has been keeping amphibians and reptiles for around 40 years and is a member of, among others, the DGHT, the BHS and the SEH. In his presentation ["Expertise training for animal owners, using the example of the DGHT"](#) he will be explaining the structure, content and organization of specialist training courses for reptile keepers, as carried out on behalf of the German Society for Herpetology and Herpetoculture (DGHT) by the VDA-DGHT Sachkunde GbR.



Frazer McDade

Frazer McDade is LVI Team Leader at Drayton Manor Zoo. Frazer writes: "I'm a graduate of Zoology with Herpetology from Bangor University. I've been working in zoological institutions for a number of years. Starting at Paignton Zoo and moving to the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, I have been involved in some amazing projects, including the Mauritian Oil spill rescue, caring for species that have never been kept in captivity before. Here at Drayton Manor, I am continuing my passion for Reptile and Amphibian work. I look forward to speaking to you about mixed species exhibits. What are they? What are their benefits? What are the common shortfalls? And how best can we make them work for us?" Frazer's presentation is entitled ["Mixed Species Exhibits: Getting Them to Work for You"](#)

Mary Pinborough

Mary Pinborough has spent the last 52 years devoted to biomedical science. Twenty years ago she moved into the field of veterinary science and set up and managed her own veterinary laboratory, focusing on the highest standards of diagnostic work and furthering education, predominantly working with exotic species. Since retiring from Pinmoore Laboratory Services (fondly known as PALS to many of us, and currently one of our Conference sponsors) Mary devotes her time to education and assistance to the National Centre for Reptile Welfare, whilst also caring for her own broad reptile collection. The health issues resulting from obesity in captive reptiles are well known to Mary, both from her extensive knowledge of its pathology and her current experiences with animals entering the NCRW facility for rehoming. Mary's presentation is entitled, ["Too much Food for Thought? Obesity in Captive Reptiles"](#).





Ross Hickles

Ross Hickles is a Senior Keeper at ZSL London Zoo. He has worked since 2008 in zoos and animal collections, with a wide range of taxa from turtles to tigers! Three years ago he started the in-house Live Food Project, which aims to produce live food on site without compromising live food welfare while exploring the benefits of good nutrition and sustainability. Ross' presentation is "[The London Zoo Livefood Project](#)"

London Zoo currently offers 15 species of live food to over 50 insect-eating animals on site!

Erin Rickman

Erin Rickman, from Lincoln University, is bringing us new information for making evidence-based improvements to reptile husbandry, in her presentation based on her PhD research: "[The impact of enriched housing on the cognition, behaviour and welfare of reptiles](#)". Erin had a previous career in teaching level 3's in a wide range of subjects within Animal Care, specialising in Exotic Animal Husbandry and Research Projects. She gained an FdSc in Animal Science, a BSc (Hons) in Applied Animal Behaviour and Welfare and is approaching the end of her PhD in Animal Behaviour, Welfare and Cognition at the University of Lincoln. Throughout her many avenues of experience, Erin specialised in reptile and amphibian keeping, focusing strongly on lizards.



Tony Wigley

Tony Wigley has worked in the reptile trade for over 35 years. He is the co-founder of the new organisation, Responsible Reptile Keeping (RRK). We are all very much aware that animal rights campaigners want to ban animal keeping, and reptile keeping in particular. Tony writes: "Launched in 2022, Responsible Reptile Keeping is funded and supported by brands, keepers, stores, educational experiences and manufacturers around the globe. RRK is fighting back against the misinformation used in these campaigns. We broadcast free digital and printed media that promotes, supports and protects responsible reptile keeping. Think of us as a dedicated media department for the international reptile community." We're pleased to announce that Tony is presenting the Premiere of RRT's brand new film, "[Setting the record straight - refuting anti-keeping propaganda](#)" at our Conference. We are following the showing of his film with what promises to be a lively Panel Discussion with delegates' participation, entitled: "The Legislative Landscape- Black, White or Grey?"





Roman Astheimer

Roman Astheimer is well known to many of us, as a reptile keeper and active member of DGHT since 1984, and of AHH since 2017. He specialized initially in arboreal and European colubrids and started keeping monitor lizards 15 years ago. He is now a Certified VDA-DGHT Sachkunde GbR expertise trainer for Herpetoculture. Roman writes: "I will talk about planning, building and outfitting a new enclosure for a pair of *Varanus prasinus* I acquired in May 2023. I will also cover general husbandry and my own experience so far, with a detailed look into food and enrichment through different feeding methods." His presentation is entitled, "[Captive Husbandry of the Green Tree Monitor, *Varanus prasinus*](#)"



Eve Carter

Eve Carter is Education and Conservation Officer at Dudley Zoo and Castle. She has recently undertaken the role of organising the zoo's research and working with all the students who conduct their research there. Eve started her BSc Wildlife Conservation with Zoo Biology, at the University of Salford in 2015, followed by an MSc Zoo Conservation Biology at Manchester Metropolitan University. Her Masters dissertation was done at Drayton Manor Zoo and is the topic of her presentation: "[Feeder insects and gut loading: a comparison of diets and nutritional impacts](#)". She writes: "For the project I used three different species of insects that are commonly used as feeder insects. The insects were split into different groups and were fed either fruit and veg, "gut load diet 1" and "gut load diet 2". I then analysed the nutritional composition of all the insects to see how the diets had impacted them. This then gave scientific backing for Drayton Manor to then choose to implement "gut load diet 2" instead of "diet 1".

Francis Cosquiere

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.' Francis will be presenting "[You are what you eat - Novel Feeding Techniques for Snakes](#)" - something for everyone who's ever struggled to develop feeding strategies for difficult species.



OUR SPONSORS



PLATINUM SPONSOR
Drayton Manor Resort

Our hosts, donating the entire Conference Suite and making this conference possible



PLATINUM SPONSOR
ZooMed Laboratories Inc.

Sponsoring travel for our Keynote Speaker, Jerry Fife, all the way from Arizona, USA

The decision to partner with the AHH/BHS conference and fund the presence of the keynote speaker Jerry Fife was an easy one. Gary Bagnall (Zoo Med founder and owner) has devoted the past 46+ years to improving the life of reptiles and other animals. Particularly turtles and tortoises, which have the most impressive settings at our California-based head office. This lead to countless innovations - notably the first UVB bulb on the market. The key drive for the company is to improve husbandry and education around this beautiful trade/hobby. Visit our table today to see our newest product for the UK!



GOLD SPONSOR
Peregrine Livefoods



Peregrine Livefoods was founded in 1987 by Tim Green and David Perry. Then, it was an innovative insect farm at the forefront of an emerging hobby. Today, it is the largest wholesaler of reptile supplies in the UK and is responsible for the production and development of ProRep, White Python, PLT Rodents and FishScience whilst also importing a plethora of products to support the advancement of herpetological husbandry. We also present our newest range, Blue River Diets, and our unique hobbyists' magazine, Exotics Keeper.

As such, we are extremely proud to sponsor the AHH and BHS Annual Conference.



Reptile Systems

GOLD SPONSOR
Reptile Systems

Reptile Systems is at the forefront of emerging technologies and our ongoing development of energy efficient and recyclable products is unparalleled. Our advances in dimmable LEDs will lead to a new era in controllable, energy efficient reptile lighting. We promote and support all forms of advancing of animal husbandry and this event draws many different types of keepers into one arena where new and old ideals are blended to create better care for your animals. This is why we are proud to help sponsor this event and those like it.



GOLD SPONSOR
Pinmoore Animal Laboratory Services

At PALS we pride ourselves on our rapid and personalised veterinary diagnostic testing service and we are passionate in our aim to support vets in giving the best care to their patients. We are specialists in the analysis of samples from all exotic species from zoos, wildlife parks and exotic veterinary practices: Aardvarks to Zebras, we do them all. Using the latest technology available we provide a wide range of tests covering everything from haematology and biochemistry to parasitology and virology. We continue to invest in cutting-edge equipment such as precision analysers that allow us to run tests from samples as small as 0.4ml, ideal when screening smaller animals. We provide a fully comprehensive, bespoke service, tailored to our clients' needs. Our friendly team are always on hand to offer advice, whether it is about which test to choose, sampling requirements or clinical interpretation.



GOLD SPONSOR
Exo Terra

At Exo Terra, we are committed to enriching the lives of reptiles and amphibians through innovative, high-quality habitat solutions. Drawing inspiration from nature, we meticulously design terrariums and accessories that mirror the natural environments of these unique creatures. “Make your reptiles feel at home” embodies the core philosophy of Exo Terra and is more than just a tagline. It represents a comprehensive approach to pet care that places the well-being of reptiles and amphibians at the forefront. It’s about creating a space where these fascinating creatures can thrive and express their natural behaviours, providing them with the comfort and familiarity of their natural habitats, even within a human-made setting.



GOLD SPONSOR
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Snakes ‘N’ Adders



SILVER SPONSOR
Greig Smith Travels

Grieg Smith Travels began when I ran a small advert in the IHS back in 2007 for my first specialised herp expedition to Southern India and the Andaman Islands with Romulus Whitaker and Gerry Martin - a runaway success! I knew then that despite my lack of a scientific background, that I was nonetheless able to create, promote and support ethical wildlife tourism and conservation through inspirational, educational tours.

Over the years our inclusive approach has seen us work with conservation organisations, herpetologists, eco lodges, local guides and more – becoming somewhat of a “go to” company for hobbyists, journalists and wildlife documentary makers. My team and I have poured our heart and soul into our wildlife tours and they have been a massive source of pride to us over the years. More importantly I personally have made so many lifelong friends, formed wonderful collaborative relationships, not to mention had the time of my life leading and running these tours and am proud that so many BHS and AHH members have supported us over the years (as well as led our trips).

It is for these personal reasons that I feel it's a privilege for my company to support the AHH/BHS Conference now.



SILVER SPONSOR
Arcadia and HabiStat
- Monkfield Reptile



Monkfield Reptile is proud to sponsor this conference. Monkfield Reptile encompasses three market leading brands: Monkfield Nutrition, Arcadia Reptile and HabiStat - all focused on improving the lives of reptiles kept as pets. As reptile keepers ourselves it is critical that we provide the right resources to educate and enable new and existing keepers to make informed decisions about how to care for their animals properly.

Arcadia has been delighted to sponsor this conference since its inception. As a brand led by passionate reptile keepers, we have one aim that is set in stone, and that is to research into and create products that allow for ever increasing animal welfare through Wild Re-creation. Since 1988 the HabiStat brand has become synonymous with quality and dependability. Innovation plays a key part but only when this serves a real purpose. We started out developing thermostats for living environments and fast forward to today we have a range of substrates in recyclable and biodegradable packaging – high quality product designed with specific species in mind as well as helping in the war against plastic. Our continued passion and fascination for reptiles and our expertise in creating the living environments where animals can thrive, not just survive, has developed into more of a holistic sense of responsibility for reptile welfare.