

Editorial

## BIAZA Research Conference 20th Anniversary Special Issue

Geoff Hosey

University of Bolton, Deane Road, Bolton, UK

Correspondence: Professor Geoff Hosey, email: gh2@bolton.ac.uk

Zoo-based research is buoyant at the moment. Twenty years ago the signs were already there of a growth in zoo science; new journals were starting to appear which included papers on zoo animals, and more zoo research was appearing in the established journals. Now, it is becoming a major undertaking just to keep up with advances in the zoo research world.

Twenty years ago also saw the start of annual zoo research conferences in the UK, organised by the BIAZA Research Committee, to bring together some of the researchers and showcase some of the research being done in British and Irish collections. The first conference, in July 1999, was organised by Dr Amy Plowman, and run at Paignton Zoo. It was a one-day conference, and had 14 talks from university and zoo-based researchers, plus six posters. As one of those speakers, I remember thinking that it was remarkable, but nonetheless very gratifying, that Amy had managed to find enough researchers and enough talks to give us a whole day of zoo science. Now, 20 years on, the conference has grown into a significant event in the zoo calendar, regularly attracting more than 100 delegates, and spanning two and a half days. It is especially gratifying that the conference also attracts delegates from outside of the BIAZA area.

The growth in zoo research over the past two decades, which is mirrored in the success of the BIAZA research conferences, is paralleled by a growth in the provision of courses in zoo biology, animal behaviour and animal welfare in universities

and colleges. This reflects an increasing desire by students to study and eventually gain employment in this field. At a time when we are losing so much of the natural world, it is encouraging that there is so much interest in contributing to the scientific evidence on which the conservation, welfare and educational goals of zoos depend.

The BIAZA research conference takes place in a different British or Irish collection every year, but in 2018 it returned to Paignton Zoo for its 20th anniversary. Those of us on the Research Committee were struck by both the variety and the quality of the research being described, and decided to try to collect together some of the best of that research into a journal special issue, in the hope that it would showcase what is being achieved in BIAZA collections. This issue of Journal of Zoo and Aquarium Research is the result. The papers presented here range from studies of visitor engagement and keeper perceptions through to animal welfare and behavioural biology. We hope that they celebrate the diversity of research happening in British and Irish collections at the moment.

It is a pleasure and a privilege to be able to publish these as a special issue of JZAR, and we are deeply indebted to Zjef Pereboom and Vicky Melfi, not only for making this possible, but also for all the support they have given along the way.

*Geoff Hosey*

*Guest Editor - BIAZA 20th Anniversary Guest Editor*