

Annual General Meeting Nominees



Prof Mary Bownes

Biography

I studied biology, and my career as a biologist was spent at universities in Sussex, Freiburg, California, and Essex before joining Edinburgh University. I taught and researched developmental biology, genetics, and molecular biology.

I trained PhD students from around the world and collaborated internationally. I was Head of the Institute of Cell and Molecular Biology and became Senior Vice Principal with responsibilities including postgraduates, fundraising, external engagement, and widening access.

I have extensive experience with boards and external bodies, such as Highlands and Enterprise and UK research councils.

In retirement, I volunteer my time to share the experience I gained over my career with charities involved in outreach, education, and conservation.

My husband and I have lived in Edinburgh for many years. My daughter trained as a Glasgow Vet and lives with her family in Yorkshire. We have all travelled extensively. My highlights include the Galapagos, Kruger Park in South Africa, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Sri Lanka, Madagascar, and Australia. All are now suffering from serious environmental challenges.

I have seen so many positive developments in recent years at RZSS. We contribute to breeding programs and conservation globally. Rewilding projects are successful, and progress toward saving 50 endangered species is remarkable.

Our zoos provide wildlife education, whilst offering a fun day out. The Highland Wildlife Park underwent a dramatic transformation to engage visitors. Ambitious plans exist for Edinburgh Zoo development. I would like to continue to be part of this.

Supporting Statement

As a biologist and nature lover, I've been fortunate to visit conservation areas worldwide. Eleven years on the RZSS board, with five as chair, have been exciting and challenging. I'm eager to enable others to understand the importance of diverse environments and their inhabitants and how RZSS positively contributes to this globally. I value complexity and diverse viewpoints for achieving positive outcomes. If elected, I'll contribute to RZSS's fulfilment of its ambitious vision.

Dr Richard Rutnagur

Biography

I am standing for re-election to the Board of RZSS in 2025. I completed my undergraduate degree in Zoology at New College Oxford under Professor Richard Dawkins and my PhD. at Glasgow University under Professor Mike Hansell.

My professional career was largely in the private sector, the majority of which in the consulting and accounting firm KPMG. Latterly during the pandemic, I was an Executive Director at the mental



health charity SAMH. For the last 15 years I have held a number of Non-Executive roles including currently, as Chairman of the House for an Art Lover in Glasgow.

In the context of the RZSS Board I bring an understanding of the conservation and science behind the Society's mission alongside a commercial acumen to help oversee the financial stability of the institution itself. I provide a balance that both supports and challenges Management in its ambitions and plans to grow and expand RZSS domestically and on the international stage.

As Trustee of a membership organisation, I am acutely aware of my duty to its members. I possess the experience and knowledge to help ensure the appropriate governance structures are operating in accordance with charity law and the associated regulatory requirements and that the focus on risk is systemic but proportionate. I achieve this by contributing to a number of sub-committees; Finance, Audit and Risk, the Business Advisory Group and the Conservation Advisory Group all of which enable me to have a broad understanding across the organisation.

Supporting Statement

The Society is at a crucial point balancing an uncertain economic climate against huge ambitions for the organisation both mission-related and operational. I have never been more excited and engaged in its plans for the future across conservation, education and community engagement, spear-headed through world class visitor attractions. Continuity is a benefit when allied to open-mindedness, insight and fresh thinking. If re-elected I will continue to bring these attributes to your Board. Thank you.

Prof Andrew Kitchener Biography

I have been Principal Curator of Vertebrates at National Museums Scotland (NMS) since 1988 and my involvement with RZSS is almost as long as a member of the Animal Welfare Advisory Group, as it is now, and since 2024 I have chaired the RZSS Conservation Advisory Group. I was a RZSS Board member from 2000 to 2009 and again since 2021.

In my museum role I am responsible for the care and development of the national vertebrate collections, numbering about 500,000 specimens, and I work closely with zoos in the UK to preserve specimens and make them available for research. I collaborate widely in my research, including with the RZSS WildGenes Lab, and have more than 280 peer-reviewed research publications. I have worked on several permanent and temporary exhibitions, including *Monkeys. Our Primate Family*, which returns to NMS in June 2025.

I have a number of national and international advisory roles, including the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission, leading the Cat Classification Task of Force of the IUCN Cat Specialist Group and membership of the IUCN Equid and Canid Specialist Groups. I am also Chair of Trustees of the People's Trust for Endangered Species, which supports conservation in the UK and overseas. I am Chair of the Scottish Wildcat Conservation Action Plan Steering Group and have been involved in the development of a new national strategy as well as being a member of the Saving Wildcats advisory committee. I was appointed Honorary Professor by the University of Edinburgh in 2024.

Supporting Statement

I am passionate about zoos and their vital conservation work. I am very proud that for more than 35 years I have been involved with RZSS from membership of the Animal Welfare Advisory Group and as a Trustee to more recently as Chair of the Conservation Advisory Group. I believe that my extensive knowledge of zoos, zoology and animal welfare as well as my experience in charity governance will continue to benefit RZSS' Board.

Charles Wardman Biography

I'm an experienced tech entrepreneur with a deep interest in the environment and sustainability. As a driven self-starter, I've contributed to national-level tech and cyber security discussions with National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC), led complex digital transformation projects, developed AI applications and supported teams in navigating significant technological and cultural change.

Throughout my life I've been passionate about our ecosystem. Witnessing firsthand the impacts of technological advancement on both our communities and the natural world has deeply influenced my perspective. It has become increasingly important to me to align my expertise with meaningful environmental action. It's a sad reality that there is less of what there should be in the world everyday.

The vital conservation, research, and educational work undertaken by RZSS deeply resonates with my values. I admire the team's commitment to protecting wildlife and habitats, and I'd be honoured to contribute my experience in support.

In recent years, I've enjoyed applying my skills as a board member for organisations focused on education, community empowerment, and sustainable practices. My approach is collaborative and pragmatic—I believe strongly in teamwork, thoughtful governance, and continuous learning.

Joining the RZSS board would be both a privilege and an opportunity to contribute to an organisation whose mission I deeply respect. I would welcome the chance to bring my professional background, coupled with my enthusiasm for conservation, to help support the organisation's ongoing success.

Thank you for considering my application—I hope to have the opportunity to discuss further.

Friendly professional bio in Lieu of LinkedIn [Meet Our Founders | Yopla](#)

Supporting Statement

I offer pragmatism, strong yet lightly held views (easily swayed with biscuits), and a respectful, persistent approach to driving change. Governance matters deeply to me, and I value the Board's role - though I'll agitate constructively when needed. Passionate about RZSS' mission, I see zoos as vital bridges connecting people with nature, in ways which no screen ever can. Ultimately though, it's for those around the board table to judge whether my contributions hit the mark!