

## Nomination Citation: Professor Simon Girling

RZSS are delighted to nominate Professor Simon Girling, former Head of Veterinary Services at the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS), for the honour of Honorary Fellowship, in recognition of his exceptional and sustained contributions to zoological medicine, animal welfare, and global conservation.

Professor Girling served RZSS for over fifteen years and was the first full-time veterinary surgeon within the organisation. He played a pivotal role in developing and expanding the veterinary department and was instrumental in establishing dedicated on-site veterinary teams at both Edinburgh Zoo and Highland Wildlife Park. His leadership significantly enhanced preventative medicine programmes, leading to measurable improvements in animal welfare standards.

Professor Girling holds several prestigious academic and professional appointments, including Honorary Clinical Associate Professor at the University of Glasgow Veterinary School, Honorary Professorial Fellow with Edinburgh Veterinary School (R(D)SVS) and Visiting Professor at the University of the Highlands and Islands. He is a Fellow of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (for Meritorious Contributions to the Profession), a Fellow of the Royal Society of Biology, and a Chartered and European-recognised Professional Biologist. Recognised as a specialist in Zoo and Wildlife Medicine since 2003, he was also among the first globally to achieve EBVS® European Veterinary Specialist certification in Zoo Health Management in 2012 and helped to set up the discipline, including ensuring it was recognised by the EU Parliament as a European Qualification Framework Level 8 (PhD equivalent) qualification across Europe and the wider-world.

From 2018-2025, Professor Girling has served as Chair of the Zoos Expert Committee, where he has led the development and ensured the publication of the latest version of the *Standards of Modern Zoo Practice for Great Britain* (May 2025), shaping national policy and advancing professional standards across the sector and significantly improving animal welfare safeguards as a result. He has also been a member of the Scottish Animal Welfare Commission since its creation in 2020, advising Scottish Government on captive and wild animal welfare, and a member of the UK's Animal Welfare Committee from 2022-2025 advising UK and Devolved Governments on all aspects of captive animal welfare.

Internationally, Professor Girling has made substantial contributions to the advancement of zoological medicine. As President of the European College of Zoological Medicine (2016-2019) and Senior Vice President (2019-2022), he helped drive professional training and specialisation. Notably, RZSS, Edinburgh Zoo became the first UK, and the fourth world-wide institution to establish a veterinary residency programme under his leadership, as well as producing the first successfully qualified veterinary specialist in Zoo Health Management under his mentorship - demonstrating a commitment to excellence in postgraduate education. He also fostered key academic partnerships with the Universities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, integrating RZSS into veterinary clinical training pathways. He has a long-time association with the British Veterinary Zoological Society being a Council Member and Treasurer from 2000-2008 and their President and Senior President from 2008-2012 and acting as Treasurer of their Charitable arm which supports

young clinicians in the world of zoological medicine (the Zebra Foundation) from 2000-2008.

Professor Girling's conservation work has had global impact. He has contributed to multiple BIAZA veterinary groups including the Bird Working Group and the Exotic Hoofstock Working Group as well as being Vice-Chair of BIAZA's Veterinary Working Group. In addition he supports EAZA's Ex-situ programmes and has, and still does serve in advisory roles, including Ex-Situ Programmes for species such as the Pallas's cat, red-fronted macaw, and Scottish wildcat as well as acting as veterinary adviser to EAZA's Felid Taxon Advisory Group (TAG) and Penguin TAG-all roles he continues to support. His expertise has been integral to major conservation initiatives including acting as the lead veterinary surgeon for the Scottish Beaver Project, Saving Wildcats, and the Gough Island Restoration Project, where he led disease risk assessments, protocol development, and applied research while maintaining direct involvement in animal health and welfare.

In addition to his applied work, Professor Girling has made significant scholarly contributions, authoring over 45 book chapters and textbooks and producing more than 180 peer-reviewed publications and conference presentations in zoological medicine and conservation.

In summary, Professor Girling's sustained leadership, international influence, and dedication to advancing veterinary science and biodiversity conservation make him an outstanding and highly deserving candidate for the award of Honorary Fellowship of RZSS.