

The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland

# IMPACT REPORT 2024



# OUR PLEDGES

**At the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS), our mission is clear: to save wildlife and empower people in Scotland and around the world to protect, value and love nature.**

The planet is at a critical juncture, with the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change meaning there are over a million species facing extinction around the globe.

Now is the time to act, which is why we've made three ambitious pledges. Firstly, **by 2030, we want to reverse the decline of at least 50 species.** In 2023, we actively engaged with 22 species, with six more in the pipeline.

Notably, we took our first significant steps towards restoring wildcats to Scotland with the release of 19 cats in the Cairngorms in summer, 18 of which are still thriving. Further afield we were involved in efforts to recover the scimitar-horned oryx, resulting in its threatened status being downlisted from Extinct in the Wild to being considered as Endangered. Conservation takes a lot of time and patience, but these are significant steps in the right direction.

Recognising that collective action is crucial, we pledged to **create deeper connections with nature for more than**

**a million people** by 2030. Our sites, Edinburgh Zoo and Highland Wildlife Park, are gateways to the natural world. In 2023 we made our zoos even more accessible by carrying out initiatives such as autism awareness training for frontline staff, and carrying out accessibility surveys at both sites. We're also forging connections with communities across Scotland.

In the same timeframe, we have committed to **empowering over 100 communities to better protect nature.** We know that stronger communities are the key to safeguarding the natural world, which can help to improve people's health and wellbeing, in turn helping to further strengthen communities. We believe that nature should be for everyone and so we continue to work with a broad range of groups including children in hospital, refugees fleeing conflict, and people who have experienced homelessness.

We're already witnessing positive change and, with your help, we can continue to make a real difference to nature in Scotland and around the world.



# CONSERVATION

Working in partnership to save wild species

From wildcats and medicinal leeches in Scotland, to giraffes in Uganda and Northern rockhopper penguins in the South Atlantic, our conservationists are playing a major role in efforts to save animals across the globe

RZSS uses science and conservation planning to support sound decision-making – working in partnership with local communities – with a long-term commitment to the process of species and habitat recovery

## Budongo chimpanzee project

We have been helping to protect chimpanzees in Uganda for nearly 20 years



## Scimitar-horned oryx

Downlisted from Extinct in the Wild to Endangered by the IUCN



### Wildcats

Critically endangered wildcats have been released into the Cairngorms National Park



### Dark bordered beauty moths

Our conservation programme has seen the first large-scale breeding and release project for this species



### Pallas's cat

We helped to get this elusive cat listed on the UN Convention on Migratory Species

**In 2023 we worked with 22 species, comprising eight in Scotland and 14 around the globe**

## NEW HABITATS

**To help boost the wild population of Endangered dark bordered beauty moths, we are undertaking a conservation breeding and release programme. These invertebrates are important to our ecosystems and in the UK are currently found in just two sites in Scotland and one in England.**

In Scotland, these moths rely on aspen suckers, which require complex management to protect. In the wild, sites with a suitable habitat are fragmented so the adult moths are not able to disperse to new sites. The programme has been focused on breeding enough moths to release into new areas of suitable habitat.

This is the first large-scale breeding attempt for this species. To breed successfully, we have to ensure that the egg, caterpillar, pupa and adult moth stages are all well-catered for. To achieve this, we have built a facility at Highland Wildlife Park with different housing for each life stage and full climate control to give our moths the best chance of breeding and producing lots more moths for release.



**160**  
caterpillars were  
released and 3,461  
eggs produced in  
the breeding  
centre in 2023

We have already overseen two successful breeding cycles at Highland Wildlife Park and the first release was in 2023.

As little is known about the dark bordered beauty moth, close monitoring of the species within our breeding facility is providing an opportunity for new insight into reproductive and ecological behaviour.

This work is in collaboration with the Rare Invertebrates in the Cairngorms project, a partnership between RZSS, the RSPB, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Buglife Scotland, Butterfly Conservation Scotland and NatureScot.

This project is also supported by the Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, managed by NatureScot, Cairngorms National Park Authority, the Cheeky Panda and players of the People's Postcode Lottery.

# BACK FROM THE BRINK

**A positive conservation story from North-Central Africa, where scimitar-horned oryx numbers increased enough to merit downlisting on the IUCN Red List from Extinct in the Wild to Endangered.**

This iconic species used to roam in huge herds across the Saharan region and, as well as being an important part of the local ecology, has historically been of significant cultural importance to the people living there. Since antiquity, oryx have even been associated with the myth of the unicorn, due to their distinctive horned profiles.

However, due to habitat loss and overhunting, oryx numbers plummeted in the 20th century, and the species was declared extinct in the wild in 2000. RZSS has been working as part of a worldwide partnership since 2012 to help restore scimitar-horned oryx to the wild by introducing carefully selected captively bred oryx into a wild population in Chad.

Our RZSS WildGenes team has been supporting the Environment Agency – Abu Dhabi by providing their genetic expertise to assess the captive populations. A ‘world herd’ was established to secure the remaining genetic diversity in the global captive population for reintroduction into Chad.

The aim of this approach is to maximise the ability of the population to adapt to future environmental changes, providing it with increased chances of long-term success. The Chadian Government and Sahara Conservation have been key to the reintroduction efforts to the Ouadi Rimé-Ouadi Achim Reserve in Chad, one of the largest reserves in the world (almost the size of Scotland). RZSS WildGenes ran genetic analysis on over 200 scimitar-horned oryx released into Chad and continues to monitor the wild population, which is now up to more than 500 individuals.

There’s much work yet to be done but there’s hope for the scimitar-horned oryx now it is back in the wild.



  
**Our RZSS WildGenes team has run genetic analysis on more than 200 scimitar-horned oryx that have been released into Chad**

# MAKING A POSITIVE IMPACT IN UGANDA

**Working in partnership with Budongo Conservation Field Station (BCFS), RZSS has been helping to protect chimpanzees in Uganda for nearly 20 years.**

Sadly these endangered animals face many threats, including the destruction of their forest habitat and the setting of deadly wire snares by local poachers, which are particularly dangerous for juvenile chimps.

Many people in the communities near Budongo live in extreme poverty, so the local diet is sometimes supplemented by the poaching of wild animals – a problem that has increased since the COVID

pandemic. Although chimpanzees are not the intended target of these poachers, they are often inadvertently caught in snares.

With our support, BCFS is assisting people locally to find sustainable careers, as well as supporting them with training in various trades, so they no longer rely on trapping for food.

RZSS also provides funding for Ugandan staff employed by BCFS – including more than 30 forest rangers – to monitor the health of the chimpanzees, support scientific fieldwork, remove



**We have contributed more than £1.2 million in direct funding, which helped leverage a further £1 million from other sources**







  
**Chimpanzee health monitoring protocols developed by BCFS have been adopted by 13 sites across Uganda. The health of over 1,000 chimpanzees is regularly monitored**

deadly snares, treat injured animals and help to raise awareness among the local community of the need for conservation work.

Dr Helen Senn, head of conservation and science programmes at RZSS, said, "It's an enormous privilege to be working with the BCFS team and to meet people who have been positively impacted by the work of the project.

"As a wildlife conservation charity, our goal is to support nature and communities in need. At Budongo – with the support of RZSS members and donors – we are doing just that."



## CARING FOR CATS

**The Pallas's cat has an enormous range across 16 countries in Eurasia, and yet is among the world's least studied felines.**

As a wildlife conservation charity with a strong interest in rare small cats, it was only natural that we became involved in the world's first global conservation project to protect the Pallas's cat.

The Pallas's Cat International Conservation Alliance (PICA) is a collaboration between RZSS, the Snow Leopard Trust, Nordens Ark and Fondation Segré. PICA improves conservation efforts for Pallas's cats by supporting dedicated research, coordinating local conservation projects and boosting species awareness.

PICA's Small Grant Programme supports local Pallas's cat conservation activity. From funding field surveys to producing educational materials, PICA understands that communities in Pallas's cat habitats are key to the animal's future.



Thanks to the work of PICA and global partners, the Pallas's cat was listed under the Convention on Migratory Species in a landmark decision at COP14 in February 2024. This will not only put these felines on the global conservation agenda but should also help to encourage countries with Pallas's cats in their territories to factor these threatened creatures into future policymaking.

## INTO THE WILD

There was a significant milestone in June with the release of 19 wildcats into the Cairngorms National Park, where they continue to be monitored and studied. The releases were carried out by the Saving Wildcats partnership project led by RZSS, which aims to prevent the extinction of wildcats in Scotland by breeding and releasing them into the wild.

Alongside this, 13 kittens were born in the partnership's off-show conservation breeding-for-release centre and 16 wildcats were paired for a third breeding season. Wildcats born in 2023 are now preparing for the challenges of life in the wild ahead of their release.



# THE STEPS TO SPECIES RECOVERY

RZSS is measuring species recovery using the conservation curve model outlined below, which recognises the full cycle of recovery and aligns with similar tools used across the wider conservation community.



**We will measure species recovery via these steps:**



## Monitoring and diagnosis

Steps of species recovery involving monitoring and research. These are steps that allow us to diagnose species decline.

## Planning and testing the solution

Steps of species recovery involved in identifying the appropriate management action, which allows us to reverse species decline. The steps include constructing a multi-stakeholder action plan, establishing ex-situ insurance and conservation breeding for release populations (if appropriate), and trialling management action in the wild (in-situ action). These steps form an important part of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) 'One Plan' species recovery approach.

## Full deployment of the solution

Steps of species recovery involved in replicating actions across the initial wild trial site, measuring success against population, range and, where appropriate, genetic diversity targets.

## Sustainable management

Steps of recovery involving increasingly minimal intervention until a species is fully recovered.

# ENGAGEMENT

Connecting people and nature

Every year, RZSS creates a greater connection between nature and people, through visits to Edinburgh Zoo and Highland Wildlife Park, our education and outreach programmes, and a host of other communication channels

**618,719**

visitors to  
Edinburgh Zoo –  
an increase of  
4.8% from 2022

Zoodle,  
our online learning  
resource, had **89,422**  
users, and an average  
interaction of **16.45**  
times per person:  
which is **HUGE!**

**124,308**

visitors to  
Highland Wildlife  
Park



**£4.3m**  
fundraised for  
RZSS projects

**£2.7m**  
fundraised for  
conservation  
and education

## FUNDRAISING

### Conservation Champions

This growing group of committed caring people is helping to save 50 species of animals from extinction by 2030. Conservation Champions are right behind our teams in the wild delivering hands-on practical action to protect animals in Scotland and more than 20 countries around the world.

**Raised with support from many people through:**

- 🐾 Individual donations, major gifts and RZSS Patrons
- 🐾 Funds raised by players of People's Postcode Lottery and awarded by the Planet Trust
- 🐾 Grants, trusts and foundations
- 🐾 Corporate partners and sponsorship
- 🐾 Gifts in Wills

# A GIANT FAREWELL

**RZSS waved an emotional goodbye to the UK's only giant pandas, Yang Guang and Tian Tian, who returned to China after 12 years at Edinburgh Zoo.**

During their time at the zoo, the pandas connected millions of people with nature and inspired them to care about and protect biodiversity.

The process of transporting the pandas back to China was complex. Bespoke crates were designed and constructed by our blacksmiths, which Yang Guang and Tian Tian had to be specifically trained to

sit in. Keepers even had to change the pandas' sleeping routines to prepare them for their early morning flight.

Only once our keepers were satisfied that conditions were optimal were the pandas allowed to embark on their specially chartered flight to China. They were accompanied by a vet and senior keeper for the duration of the journey.

Yang Guang and Tian Tian have now happily settled into their new homes in China and their legacy in Scotland will last for a long time to come.



## EVENTS

There were more than 500 participants in our panda-themed events in the months prior to their departure. These included panda-themed brunches and director's tours.

## CONSERVATION

- 🐾 Research with our pandas led to the pioneering of a now widely used anaesthetic protocol
- 🐾 A collaborative project with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh provided clearer insight into what pandas eat in the wild

## OUTREACH

57,804 Scottish schoolchildren have engaged with our free programme to learn about the culture, geography and wildlife of China.



The departure of the giant pandas in December was our biggest story of the year, resulting in nearly 800 news articles worldwide, with a potential audience of 8.58 billion



27,000 more people are following the Edinburgh Zoo social media channels, a 7% increase from the previous year

## COMMUNICATION IS KEY

**Effective communication is essential to raise awareness of our mission and inspire people to protect, value and love nature. By clearly conveying our goals and values and demonstrating the great work that RZSS does, we hope to encourage everyone to join our efforts and become part of our community.**

During 2023 we worked with media from across Scotland, the UK and further afield to help highlight some of the amazing work RZSS is doing.

For example, when wildcats were released into the Cairngorms during the summer, the news reverberated around the world and was picked up by major news outlets from nearly every continent. Our staff were on hand to undertake interviews, provide images, video and information, and keep our members informed.

Our members were also kept up to speed on all things RZSS thanks to

the relaunch of our member's magazine, which scored very highly in every category of a readership survey conducted in September.

And we also used our public affairs expertise to try to persuade decision-makers in Holyrood and Westminster to support some of the causes which align with the RZSS mission.

For example, when responding to the Scottish Government's biodiversity strategy consultation we made the case for including more emphasis on species restoration as well as habitat restoration.

Without a focus on species reintroduction and restoration, and the genetic diversity within those species, we could find ourselves in a situation where we have restored habitats but have lost their rarer and more vulnerable inhabitants.

Nearly 10% of all our visitors took part in one of our Discovery programme talks



## MEMBERSHIP ON THE RISE

**In 2023 the number of RZSS members increased by nearly 14%, from 39,480 to 44,916.**

Our membership has been going from strength to strength over recent years, with more people joining the RZSS family and helping to create a world where nature is protected, valued and loved.

Membership represents outstanding value as it pays for itself after just three visits, providing lots of great days out every year. And there are a range of other benefits for members to enjoy, from

discounts at our retail and restaurant outlets, to free entry to other zoos in the UK and Europe, as well as receiving regular updates on any RZSS-related developments via our magazines or email correspondence.

Of course, many of our members just want to be able to connect with nature and wildlife as often as they like, whether that be at Edinburgh Zoo or Highland Wildlife Park.

So it's no wonder that more people than ever are choosing to join RZSS, and to enjoy all the amazing benefits that membership brings.



# LEARNING PROJECTS GET TOP MARKS

**25,900**  
learners took part  
in our education  
sessions in 2023

## Widening conservation careers

We want to inspire as many young people as possible to take a lifelong interest in wildlife conservation. As part of our commitment we teamed up with the Edinburgh O2 Academy's Developing the Young Workforce initiative, where we met with 16-24 year olds to discuss training, education and potential career paths available to them in the wildlife conservation industry.

## School schemes a success

Our popular summer school initiatives, which we run at Edinburgh Zoo for Primary 1 to S4 pupils to learn more about nature, were completely sold out again this year.

Our Science Summer School, which we run at Edinburgh Zoo and Highland Wildlife Park, was also a big success, with pupils from 16 local council areas across Scotland participating.

## A wild winner

In Edinburgh Zoo's wildlife garden, the Wild Learning programme helped boost primary school children's outdoor confidence. A parent said:

"I'll never be able to put into words how much of a positive impact RZSS had made to my son's life. He was so full of energy after these sessions."

## Making RZSS more accessible

Our additional support needs groups expanded into primary and secondary schools, with seven cohorts visiting RZSS sites in 2023. Focused on developing friendships and supporting health and wellbeing, on average participants reported a 20% increase in their connection to nature after taking part.

**14.82%**

We pledged to create stronger connections to nature for more than a million people. So it was fantastic to see a nearly 15% rise in connectedness reported by participants in our learning sessions





  
**The centre was created in collaboration with community-led partnerships**

  
**The Learning Hive will also be used by adults and lifelong learners, as well as those taking vocational training to make a career change**

## A NEW EXPERIENCE

**Great strides were made towards the creation of Scotland's Wildlife Discovery Centre – an interactive, immersive and educational resource which we think will inspire many more people to connect with nature.**

The multi-million pound project is being constructed at Highland Wildlife Park, funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund led by NatureScot, and part-funded through the European Development Fund, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, the Postcode Planet Trust, the SSE Renewables Sustainable Development Fund, and the Hugh Fraser Foundation. The project also includes the refurbishment of Highland Wildlife Park's existing visitor centre.

Beccy Angus, RZSS head of discovery and learning, said, "The Scottish Wildlife Discovery Centre project covers all our engagement work – from formal learning with schools to informal community-based projects, as well as key parts of the visitor

experience. And then it's about the spaces that enable those stories – the Conservation Den, the Learning Hive and the Gateway. They are the three new venues that give us the opportunity to work with all those communities, remove barriers to access and learning, and improve inclusion."

The Conservation Den will put visitors right in the middle of our work, where they can see animals within our reserve, those that inhabit the place as their own wild space and the breeding-for-release sites for our wildcats.

The main exhibition space, the Gateway, uses innovative digital technology to focus on environmental challenges, with an emphasis on what humans and wildlife have in common, and shares positive stories of human intervention on behalf of nature.

A landmark structure on a brae where the wildlife park meets the national park, the Learning Hive will be used by schools, charities and community groups.

# ACCESSIBILITY

## Showing our pride

We firmly believe that everyone should be able to experience nature and all of its benefits, which is why we're constantly trying to remove barriers – physical and otherwise – to broaden access and inclusion.

As part of that commitment, we stand with the LGBTQ+ community, making our zoos as welcoming a place as possible to work and visit. Many of our staff and volunteers also participate in the annual Edinburgh Pride and Highland Pride marches. And we're proud to work with the likes of LGBT Youth Scotland as part of our community outreach programmes.

## WIDENING ACCESS

**We know that making nature more accessible is fundamental because people protect and value what they love and understand. This year we made our sites more inclusive by:**

- 🐾 Working with CEMVO Scotland to increase the ethnic minority voluntary sector's capacity and sustainability
- 🐾 Opening Edinburgh Zoo's accessible Changing Places toilet
- 🐾 Improving our sensory bags – which include maps, ear defenders, sunglasses, fidget toys and binoculars – to make visits more relaxing for children with additional support needs
- 🐾 Increasing the availability of mobility vehicles, scooters and buggies
- 🐾 Holding virtual and new in-person outreach sessions for care home residents
- 🐾 Continuing to support our Dementia Socials
- 🐾 Running our Friday Friends initiative to support visually impaired and deaf children and their families

## ACCESSIBILITY CHAMPIONS

**To make the visitor experience more accessible, our staff and volunteers took part in the following training this year:**

- 🐾 Guide Dogs Scotland's sighted guide training
- 🐾 Autism Scotland's autism training
- 🐾 Communication training from VocalEyes
- 🐾 Makaton language training with the City of Edinburgh Council

**"RZSS has clearly worked hard to be accessible.**

**We were offered sensory bags for the children with a sensory map of the zoo.**

**To be asked if there was anything staff could do to make our visit easier was such a unique experience. We didn't feel like a burden or judged, just accommodated."**



# COMMUNITY

Bringing people together

We're using nature to help improve health and wellbeing, and strengthen communities









We delivered engagement sessions to more than 500 community groups during 2023



**2,730**

**Discovery Passes were redeemed, giving people access to our sites and vouchers for lunch – providing dignity of choice**

**In 2023, our community programmes engaged with nearly 10,000 people, across a range of groups, which included:**

-  Cyrenians
-  Age Scotland
-  Royal Hospital for Children and Young People
-  Autism Scotland
-  Black Scottish Adventurers
-  Multi-Cultural Family Base
-  British Deaf Association
-  Dregghorn Barracks

**... and many more.**

# CHILDREN PAINT PEBBLES FOR PENGUINS

**Because we understand that some children can't go to nature, we try to bring nature to them.**

One such initiative saw members of our Discovery and Community team get children interested and involved in the penguin breeding season at Edinburgh Zoo, by bringing pebbles into the children's hospital in Edinburgh for them to paint.

The project with the hospital aims to bring children closer to nature and the animals at Edinburgh Zoo and Highland Wildlife Park. The penguins are hugely popular with children at the hospital and they regularly watch them on RZSS's live webcams. They kept up with breeding activity at Penguins Rock and watched the birds pick up their painted pebbles and use them to build nests.

Discovery and Community Officer Rebecca Parr said, "The kids loved it! They got to see the pebbles which they had painted being installed into the penguin enclosure and then watch as they were used as part of the courtship ritual.

"One boy was upset because he'd just been told he wasn't going to get home. We went along to see him and by the time we left he was laughing, smiling and telling me all about penguins, who just happened to be his favourite animal. He painted three pebbles and it really transformed his day from being one of disappointment to one of delight, knowing that he'd been able to help a penguin."



**In a first for Europe, a new meerkat enclosure is being created at the hospital to deliver learning and experience sessions for young patients**





"Our boys have loved coming along to the workshops. Thank you!"

"This was fantastic! We're RZSS members and the family has absolutely loved these workshops, we can't wait for the next ones."

## WILD WORKSHOPS

A Highland Wildlife Park team hosted five three-hour takeover sessions in the Science Skills Academy's Newton Room classroom in Kincaig Community Hall.

Over the sessions we welcomed 55 individuals, typically in family groups, with our most popular session the one on native Scottish wildlife.

Each session included activities such as a Japanese macaque game in RZSS Around the World, DNA extraction activity, and a Saving Wildcat spot the difference puzzle.





We supported  
16,775  
volunteer hours  
at our sites

We engaged  
with over 1,000  
people outside of  
our sites, through  
workshops, talks  
and learning  
sessions

Community  
sessions at our  
sites reached  
over 3,500  
people from over  
100 different  
communities

## NEW BEGINNING

**We are incredibly proud to work with communities across Scotland to broaden inclusion and access to nature.**

Our community programme includes supporting refugees, many of whom have lost loved ones and experienced severe trauma. We hope that having access to green spaces and being close to wildlife will be an important step towards their recovery.

Working with Volunteer Edinburgh and Dnipro Kids, we offered free visits to Edinburgh Zoo to more than 2,687 refugees in 2023, predominantly from Ukraine and Afghanistan.

In many instances, we also provided food and shop vouchers free of charge. We supported this work by growing our community team with support from several funding partners.



# KEY TO WORK

**Giving young people the opportunity to learn about conservation and animal husbandry as well as nutrition and biology was the aim of the Key to Work pilot programme with homeless charity Cyrenians, which launched early in 2023.**

Based at Edinburgh Zoo, the six-week programme also included field study and orienteering. It culminated with the young people giving a presentation to our learning team and chief executive on an animal they'd like to see at the zoo.

The pilot was such a success it has continued, giving more young people the chance to get closer to the natural world.

## PETE'S STORY

A senior school pupil who struggled with literacy and comprehension, Pete was unable to cope in a mainstream class. However, he really began to flourish on the Key to Work placement.

There were concerns that Pete might not be able to take part in the presentation at the end of the project, due to his limited literacy and difficulty concentrating and completing tasks. The small group sizes allowed for one-to-one work with Pete and he gave an excellent presentation – engaging and passionate when speaking and showing natural public-speaking skills.

At school Pete hadn't been given the chance to give presentations because of the level of support required. Thanks to Key to Work he gave a compelling pitch.



**"I've been really anxious and worried I'd never have fun again. I've laughed the whole day and been able to have fun."**



**"The feedback from the young people has been fantastic. One young person even described the experience as 'life-changing'."**

# WILDLIFE SKILLS

**Highland Wildlife Park teamed up with the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) to deliver a four-week programme to help participants improve their teamworking, communication and time-management skills, while building closer connections with nature.**

Students from the university's Perth-based applied learning courses, Skill Up and Moving On, shared experiences with our animals and searched for native species while pond-dipping and bird-watching in the wildlife garden.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with the young people involved enjoying getting up close to different species and working with Highland Wildlife Park's Discovery and Learning team.

"This project was extremely beneficial to the young people who participated," said UHI Perth's Caroline Cowe. "Their confidence in interacting with other people improved dramatically and they all expressed a feeling of wellbeing."

Student feedback has helped to shape the direction and delivery of this programme, which went on to be delivered to pupils at Kingussie High School.

With the opening of Scotland's Wildlife Discovery Centre at Highland Wildlife Park, we'll be delivering more Wild Skills programmes like this.





## MEET VOLUNTEER JOAN FURMAGE



### **What made you want to volunteer?**

My parents were fellows of RZSS and used to volunteer at Edinburgh Zoo, so I have fond childhood memories of coming here as a family. Back then, we were allowed to buy carrot batons to feed most of the animals, or buns to give to Sally the elephant. I was immediately hooked and have been coming back ever since.

### **What keeps you coming back?**

It's a tie between the animals – whom I adore – and the people. I don't just mean the staff working at the zoo, who are wonderful, but also those who come to visit – particularly those in winter, who tend to be even more interested in the animals than just having a fantastic day out.

### **Favourite volunteer duty?**

On Mondays, I help with groups of Additional Support for Learning kids. We try to get them outside and let them experience all the amazing benefits of nature. It's so rewarding to see them blossom as the term goes on.

### **What would you say to potential volunteers?**

If you care about nature, or if you just want to make a difference to people's lives, RZSS is the place for you. I've been volunteering now for 28 years and I just keep coming back for more.

### **Favourite animal?**

The red pandas are my favourite, and one in particular – Bruce. He's got so much personality.

# FIND OUT HOW YOU CAN MAKE AN IMPACT

Become a member and enjoy  
great days out at Edinburgh  
Zoo and Highland Wildlife Park  
Visit [rzss.org.uk/membership](https://rzss.org.uk/membership)  
Email [membership@rzss.org.uk](mailto:membership@rzss.org.uk)



Adopt an animal and help to care  
for your favourite zoo animals  
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