



Zoo Research Handbook 2024

Contents

Introduction – Page 3
Mission Statement – Page 3
The Research Officer – Page 3
Priority Research – Page 3
Final Project and Presentation – Page 3
Application Procedure – Page 3
Assessment of research proposals - Page 4
One Day observational Form – Page 5
Research Application Form - Page 7
Sample Request form – Page 11
Research agreement – Page 12

Introduction

The British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) highlights research as a major role of good zoos and is a requirement of our zoo licence.

Research is one of the primary objectives of Dartmoor Zoo (DZS). DZS aims to continually increase their research potential and output in view of the growing need to increase our knowledge necessary for understanding and undertaking conservation tasks both in the zoo and out in the field.

Mission Statement

To protect endangered species, promote biodiversity and educate about the need for conservation.

The Research Officer

The research team is responsible for overseeing all onsite research, and assessing its viability in terms of welfare, husbandry, and captive breeding. A Research Officer will be assigned to a visiting researcher and will be the first point of contact and is also responsible for acting as a liaison between researchers, keepers, curators, and any other relevant staff.

Priority Research

DZS will produce a list of priority research topics each year. This list includes areas that have been identified by the zoo team. This list will be distributed to universities, listed on our website and to individuals on request. Our current priority areas include;

- Nutrition based research
- Nocturnal behaviour research
- Reptile and amphibian research
- The impact of training on animal behaviour

DZS will still welcome project proposals outside of the priority topic areas.

Final Project and Presentation

All research carried out at the zoo needs to be written up and a full report to be given to the Research Officer. We may also invite you to present your research at our internal research meetings or write up for our internal journal to disseminate research findings to all staff.

Procedure

1. Initial contact is to be made by the tutor/ project supervisor OR the student.
2. An application form must be completed providing information about you, your academic details and proposed project details.
3. The Research Officer is happy to discuss project ideas if necessary, especially if the project is one from our priority list.
4. Once the application has been submitted it is subject to assessment by the Research Officer. The logistics of the project and the project design will be discussed with the Animal Curator, Head of Education and Research, CEO and ethics board if necessary.
5. Research applications are assessed as soon as possible. Students should be aware that under some circumstances it may take up to one month to accept or decline a project. Therefore, the student should apply within plenty of time.

6. The applicant will be informed as soon as possible as to whether the application has been accepted or rejected. There may be some modifications or alterations suggested.
7. If the project is accepted, the researcher will be invited to attend an induction with the Head of Education and Research, or Research Officer.
8. Before data collection commences, the researcher will be issued with a research pass at a cost of £40 plus a £20 deposit. The deposit will be returned when the final report is submitted along with the research pass to the zoo. For short term studies of up to three days the fee is £20 plus a £10 deposit.
9. On completion of data collection, researchers must provide Dartmoor Zoo with an electronic copy of the raw data used for analysis (on a Microsoft package) if requested by Dartmoor Zoo.
10. On completion of the study, students must provide an electronic copy of the final report within two months of the course submission deadline.

Assessment of Research Proposals

Animal related research proposals will be assessed by the Research Officer and the Director of Animal and Veterinary Care based on the project design and the logistics of carrying out the data collection. Education based research proposals will be assessed by the Research Officer and the Head of Education and Research. Any application will be assessed against the following points:

- Compatibility with Dartmoor Zoo's mission statement.
- The value of the research topic to our collection, the management of our collection and conservation.
- The project may be subject to ethical review, to ensure that animal welfare is not compromised and legislation and on-site policies are met. All research should involve non-invasive methods, to impose minimal stress to the animals. Research projects involving human participants (e.g. education based research) will also be subject to ethical review.
- The impact of the proposed research on staff and visitors.
- Compatibility with management and husbandry routines.
- The proposal should have realistic aims and sound scientific method for data collection and analysis.

It may be the case that only some aspects of the proposal are not suitable, therefore, the Research Officer may accept the proposal on the provision that some aspects are altered.

Forms in this handbook:

- **One Day Observation form** – To be completed if conducting a one-day observational study.
- **Research Application form** – To be completed after initial contact has been made by the student.
- **Induction form** – To be completed by the Research Officer during the induction before data collection commences.
- **Research Agreement** – To be signed by students and Research Officer before data collection commences.

One Day Observational Form if you would like to conduct a one-day study as part of a college or university assignment for example, to develop an ethogram for a particular species, please fill in the following form. Please note, you will be required to pay a daily entry fee for this research. For any research lasting longer than one day, please complete the Research Application Form.

This form should be returned to:

Louise Cox, Research Officer, Dartmoor Zoo, Sparkwell, PL7 5DG. research@dartmoorzoo.co.uk

Personal details

Title:
First name:
Surname:

Home (long term e.g. family) address:
Tel:
E-mail:

Term address:
Tel:
E-mail:

Which is the easiest method to contact you about this request: Email/ post/ other

Academic details

Course, including level (A Levels / BSc / MSc):
Academic institution:
Academic supervisor:
Tel:
E-mail:
Address:

Assignment title:
What are you hoping to learn from this research:
Species involved:
Project aim:

Methodology:

Research Application Form

Please complete this form if you wish to undertake research onsite at Dartmoor Zoo. The information you supply on this form will enable us to assess whether we can accommodate your research. If you would like to talk about your research project before completing this form, please contact research@dartmoorzoo.co.uk

This form should be returned to:

Louise Cox, Research Officer, Dartmoor Zoo, Sparkwell, PL7 5DG research@dartmoorzoo.co.uk

Personal details

Title:	
First name:	
Surname:	
Term address:	Home (long term e.g. family) address:
Tel:	Tel:
Which is the easiest method to contact you about this request: Email/ post/ other	

Academic details

Course, including level (BSc/Msc/PhD):
Academic institution:
Academic supervisor:
Tel:
E-mail:
Address:

Project details

Project title:
Is this project from the list of priority topics produced by Dartmoor Zoo? Yes/No
Species involved:
Project aims and research questions:

Project Rational (e.g. why is this research important? What is the value of this research to captive breeding programmes/conservation)? Please continue on additional sheets if necessary:

Project benefits and outcomes (what do you hope to learn from this research and how could it impact captive animal welfare):

Methods

Type of study (please highlight):

Observational (no modifications)

Experimental (modification necessary)

Sample request (e.g. faecal) – Please fill in the 'Sample Request' Form

Methodology, including pilot study, manipulations, sampling, data collection, statistics:

What support do you require from Dartmoor Zoo? Please include any equipment you require, any involvement from keepers or the research team and how long you estimate this to take.

How do you plan to disseminate the results of your research? Please give a timeline for this.

Will you be using any specialist equipment which may require certain operating conditions?

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Data Collection Period

Proposed data collection period (DD/MM/YY – DD/MM/YY):
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Number of days per week:

Total number of days:

Ethics

Does your project have ethical approval from your university or institution?
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Additional information

Is there any other additional information which may help us in our decision (e.g. support from a recognised scientific body or organisation, involvement with other zoos):
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What is the latest possible deadline that you require a decision on this application?

References:

Please attached any other additional information e.g. letter of support from organisations or tutors

Applicants signature:

Date:
Supervisors' signature:
Date:
I understand that by signing above I have agreed to supervise the project outlined in the proposal.

Office Use Only

Date Application Received:
Copied to relevant staff:
Decision made: Accepted/Rejected
Applicant informed of decision:
Additional Comments:

Sample Request form

What sample do you require (e.g. hair, faecal)?
Which species do you require the samples from?
How many samples do you require?
Do you need to know which individual animal the sample is from (where we have more than one individual animal)?
Do you need any equipment to collect these samples? Are you providing equipment?
How do the samples need to be stored and how often will you collect samples?
What dates will you be collecting samples?
Do you require any permits to collect or transport these samples?

Research Agreement

Terms and Conditions – Please read carefully

The Visiting Researcher:

1. Researchers must have the agreement of their course supervisor that the study is acceptable and that they will supervise the study unless they are being supervised directly by the zoo.
2. On the induction day, the researcher will be issued with a research pass at a cost of £40 plus a £20 deposit. The deposit will be returned when the final report is submitted along with the research pass to the zoo. For short term studies of up to three days the fee is £20 plus a £10 deposit.
3. The visiting researcher agrees to produce their research pass at the entrance on each visit and to wear their badge the entire time that they are in the Zoo conducting research.
4. The visiting researcher agrees to always behave in a responsible and acceptable manner and remain within the public access areas of the zoo, unless otherwise agreed by Research Officer and Curator of Animals and accompanied by a member of staff.
5. Researchers must ensure that the study is completed or inform Dartmoor Zoo as soon as possible if the project is not going to be completed.
6. Dartmoor Zoo must be informed if any changes are made to the study, especially to the aims or methodology.
7. The visiting researcher must return any equipment owned by Dartmoor Zoo on the final day of data collection.
8. On completion of the study, researchers must provide an electronic copy of the final report within two months of the course submission deadline. If the student does not send the research report within two months of submitting their project they forfeit the deposit. The zoo reserves the right to contact the researchers supervisor to gain a copy of the research report, and in this case the deposit would also be forfeited.
9. If DZS requests it, the researcher must share raw data with Dartmoor Zoo.
10. The visiting researcher must send Dartmoor Zoo a copy of any publication, abstract or poster before submission (including university course posters) and the researcher must receive approval before submitting.
11. The visiting researcher must send poster presentations or presentations accompanying a verbal presentation to Dartmoor Zoo for approval prior to the presentation (including university course presentations).
12. The visiting researcher must guarantee the anonymity of Dartmoor Zoo in any papers or presentations if requested.
13. The visiting researcher agrees to acknowledge Dartmoor Zoo in any papers or presentations (unless anonymity is requested) and to include the Research Officer or other staff members as co-authors if requested when appropriate (where the member of staff has had significant involvement in the project).
14. The visiting researcher is responsible for their own travel to and from the zoo, including the cost.
15. The visiting researcher will comply with the health and safety guidelines written below.

Dartmoor Zoo (DZS):

1. DZS will provide free entry to the researcher during their agreed data collection period on specific days for the purposes of the research project only.

2. DZS will not provide free entry to friends or family.
3. If conditions change, e.g., enclosure design, group composition or husbandry which could potentially affect the research project, Dartmoor Zoo will ensure that the researcher is informed as soon as possible.
4. DZS will facilitate the practical requirements of the study.
5. DZS will provide basic information about the animals, their enclosure, diet etc.
6. DZS will provide relevant equipment for a study where possible (if in stock).
7. DZS will not provide supervision for independent projects.
8. DZS Reserves the right to publish the data/project. In this case, the permission of the researcher will be sought, (or the researchers supervisor if the researcher cannot be contacted) and the researcher will be named as a co-author.
9. Retains the right to revoke agreements or refuse admission to the zoo at any time.

Health and Safety Guidelines

During your data collection period you will be representing both Dartmoor Zoo's research department and your own institution. Therefore, you must act responsibly at all times.

You are responsible for your own health and safety when in the zoo and any aspect of your research is undertaken at your own risk. However, the following guidelines must be followed for your own safety, and the safety of other visitors, staff, and animals.

1. Do not attempt to touch any animals (with the exception of our goat paddock and close encounters area).
2. Do not enter an enclosure with any animals, do not feed any animals, do not poke any object through the enclosure mesh or put items in enclosures. You must inform keepers or another member of staff if you see anyone attempting to do any of these things.
3. Do not cross any safety barriers or enter any enclosures or off-show areas of the zoo without the permission of the Senior Keeper or Curator.
4. Wash your hands after working with or around animals.
5. Do not take, use, or move any tools or equipment without permission from a relevant member of staff and have received sufficient training.
6. You must follow any instructions given by members of staff, e.g., in the event of an emergency, to ensure your own safety and the safety of other visitors, staff and animals.
7. If you are injured in the zoo, please inform a member of staff immediately who will ensure that appropriate action is taken.
8. You will not be allowed in the zoo outside of opening hours, except with permission from our COO.
9. Smoking is not permitted when working with or around the animals or in any off-show areas.
10. You must inform keepers or another member of staff immediately if you see anything in an enclosure which might harm an animal or could be used by the animal to escape or if you think an animal is sick or injured.

Public Relations Information

1. Always have your research pass on you for the entire time that you are in the zoo conducting research. Research passes should be on display at all times.
2. If you are asked any questions by visitors or staff, always be polite, provide assistance if you can or direct them to a member of staff or volunteer.

3. Do not talk to any media reporters about the zoo, other than if requested. Direct any media reporters to Clare Lee or Emma Thomas.
4. Do not post any material relating to your study on any social media websites or any other online forum unless requested or approved by the Research Officer or Head of Research and Education. Do not post any material regarding births, deaths or zoo sensitive information (including off-show areas) unless previously approved by the Research Officer or Head of Education and Research.
5. You may hear confidential information about the zoo, animals, staff, volunteers or finances which must remain private. You must not discuss confidential information with anyone outside the zoo. Please ask a member of staff if you are unsure if something is confidential or not.

Name: Signed: Date:

Research Officer: Signed: Date: