

ANH New Virtual Issue 'The History of the Zoological Society of London (ZSL)'

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Dear Friends

We are delighted to let you know that to complement the 2026 joint meeting of the Zoological Society of London (ZSL) and the Society for the History of Natural History (SHNH) titled [The Zoological Society of London \(ZSL\) at 200: Science, Society, and the Natural World](#), Ann Sylph, former ZSL Librarian has brought together a new virtual issue [The History of the Zoological Society of London \(ZSL\)](#)

Founded in 1826, the [Zoological Society of London \(ZSL\)](#) is now a pioneering, science-led international conservation charity, working in over 50 countries worldwide. It has a fascinating history reflected in the many papers published in [Archives of Natural History](#), the journal of the [Society for the History of Natural History \(SHNH\)](#), in which ZSL is mentioned, whether as the major focus of the paper or incidentally.

In this virtual issue of *Archives of Natural History* celebrating the bicentenary of the ZSL, Ann has selected papers which reflect the Society's wide interests, activities and achievements. Rather than attempting to be comprehensive, she has made a representative selection showing ZSL's range of interests in the past. There are many further avenues for research into ZSL's history and activities, such as the little explored area of the afterlives of animals from London Zoo and Whipsnade Zoo. Ann has therefore included three examples – the gorilla 'Mok' and two giant pandas, 'Ming' and 'Grandma'. Additionally, there is scope to uncover more of ZSL's 'hidden histories', such as recognizing its colonial legacy and acknowledging and giving credit to 'forgotten' contributors.

This virtual issue is currently free to view or download. We invite you to enjoy.

List of Articles

[The first prospectus of the Zoological Society of London: new light on the Society's origins](#)

John Bastin, 1970, 5(5), pp. 369-388

This important paper corrects previous misconceptions about the founding of the Zoological Society of London, giving correct dates and clearly showing that Sir Stamford Raffles was the Founder and author of the prospectus to establish ZSL. The paper points out the mistakes about the timeline made in many secondary sources. It includes reproductions of both the first and second prospectus as well as lists of subscribers at various dates in 1825 and 1826.

[A further note on the origins of the Zoological Society of London](#)

John Bastin, 1973, 6(4), pp. 236-241

Following on from his earlier paper, John Bastin presents further evidence confirming the role played by Sir Stamford Raffles in establishing the Zoological Society of London using evidence in the letters of the Duke and Duchess of Somerset. The Duke was to become one of the ZSL's first four Vice-Presidents.

[Zoological collections in the early British Museum: the Zoological Society's Museum](#)

Alwyne Wheeler, 1997, 24(1), pp. 89-126

‘The most important zoological collection in London outside of the British Museum was that established by the Zoological Society of London. It was to have only a fleeting existence of 30 years from its foundation’. Despite its brief existence, ZSL’s Museum was an important collection. The contents, issues and resulting dispersal are discussed in this review of the Museum’s role and afterlife.

[‘Your lordship’s most obliged servant’: letters from Louis Fraser to the thirteenth Earl of Derby, 1840 to 1851](#)

Amberley Moore, 2004, 31(1), pp. 102-122

In 1832, Louis Fraser, aged 13, was employed by ZSL for 14 years. He subsequently worked for ZSL’s President, the thirteenth Earl of Derby and also collected bird specimens for ZSL’s Secretary, Philip Lutley Sclater.

[Stanley Smyth Flower: professional soldier, scientific advisor, administrator, zoologist](#)

Amberley Moore and Frances Warr, 2009, 36(2), pp. 361-362

A short biography of Stanley Smith Flower who had a lifelong association with ZSL. His father, Sir William Flower, was President 1879–1899. Stanley Smith Flower began attending ZSL Meetings from the age of 11. He later served as Vice-President, 1927–29, and was a member of the governing body, Council, 1924–36.

[Bibliography of the contributions to the study of the Annelida by Frank Evers Beddard with details of the material reported](#)

John W. Coles, 1981, 10(2), pp. 273-314

Frank Evers Beddard, Prosector of ZSL from 1885 until his retirement in 1915. In his role as Prosector he dissected animals which had died in the Zoo. He continued his research following his retirement. The bibliography of his publications about the Annelida includes many papers published in ZSL’s own publications, the *Transactions* and the *Proceedings of the Zoological Society of London*.

[William Yarrell \(1784–1856\), friend and adviser to Charles Darwin](#)

Christine E. Jackson, 2020, 47(1), pp. 105-114

William Yarrell was a founder member of ZSL and Secretary (1826, 1836–1838), Treasurer (1849–1856) and Vice-President (1839–1844, 1845–1851).

[The materials and methods of hand-colouring zoological illustrations](#)

Christine E. Jackson, 2011, 38(1), pp. 53-64

The illustration of newly described species was of great importance in the dissemination of information. ZSL’s scientific publications (*Transactions* and *Proceedings*) were richly illustrated with lithographic prints based on artworks by many talented artists. ZSL Library and Archives are fortunate to hold pattern books for some of these plates, consisting of proofs from the lithographic stone and coloured by the artist as a guideline for the colourists working on these publications. The author describes the process for colouring a wide range of zoological illustrations.

[The art of classification: Brian Houghton Hodgson and the ‘Zoology of Nipal’ \(Patron’s review\)](#)

David A. Lowther, 2019, 46(1), pp. 1-23

Brian Houghton Hodgson’s manuscripts and papers form one of the most significant collections within ZSL’s Library and Archives, and his unpublished ‘Zoology of Nipal’ is one of the great ‘what ifs’ of nineteenth-century natural history. The product of over 20 years’ research, incorporating

thousands of pages of notes and drawings that detailed many species new to European science, it was intended to be the standard work on Himalayan animals. This paper explores and analyses the scientific and institutional factors that shaped Hodgson's work on Himalayan fauna.

[‘On deposit’: animal acquisition at the Zoological Society of London, 1870–1910 \(Patron’s review\)](#)

Eleanor Larsson, 2021, 48(1), pp. 1-23

This author examines ZSL's use of animals on 'deposit'. Often a temporary arrangement, somewhat like a loan, deposits were made by a range of individuals involved in the animal trade, including commercial animal dealers. Through the system of depositing, the Zoological Society became the custodians of a wide range of animals which they could exhibit. The author explains how the system worked with a particular focus on the deposits of Lionel Walter Rothschild.

[Ming the forgotten celebrity: a giant panda skull at the Royal College of Surgeons of England](#)

Kristin D. Hussey, 2014, 41(1), pp. 159-162

'Ming', a giant panda, was one of the many popular, celebrity animals at ZSL. This paper looks at both her life and afterlife.

[Mo Koundje \('Mok'\): the life of a western lowland gorilla \(c.1929–1938\)](#)

Rebecca Machin, 2022, 49(1), pp. 1-11

'Mok' was another popular, celebrity animal at London Zoo for six years, with an afterlife at Leeds Museums and Galleries.

[The journey of the giant panda 'Grandma' \(Ailuropoda melanoleuca\) from China to Britain in 1938–1939](#)

Clare M. Brown, 2025, 52(1), pp. 1-12

'Grandma' was one of five giant pandas to be collected by Floyd Tangier-Smith and brought to London Zoo in December 1938. She survived for only 17 days following her arrival but her remains were distributed around Britain for investigation into the anatomy of the giant panda.