

Inspection Report

Date of inspection: 26/11/2024 Date report completed: 03/12/2024

Name of applicant or current licence holder: Daniel Clark and Liam McElroy

Name and address of zoo: UK Owl and Raptor Centre, Groombridge Place, Groombridge Hill, Groombridge, Royal Tunbridge Wells, Kent
Postcode: TN3 9QG

Tel no: [REDACTED] Licence Number: AW047

Date of last formal inspection: 15/06/20222 Type of last formal inspection: 14(2) Periodical

Timing of next formal inspection: 26/11/2027 Type of next formal inspection: 14(2) Periodical

Type of inspection Statutory composition of inspection team Please tick appropriate box

Section 10 Periodical: 2 Defra/Welsh Government nominees; 1 LA vet; option of up to 2 more from LA .. ☐

Section 11 Special: Any number of competent LA authorised appointees ☐

Section 14(1)(b) dispensation renewal under section 6(1A)(a) (where a direction has been made that section 10 shall not apply):
Defra/Welsh Government nominee/s..... ☐

Section 14(2) dispensation Periodical:
Defra/Welsh Government nominee/s..... ☐

For a licence inspection (Section 4(1A)(b)) and a significant change inspection (Section 9A(8)) please use the inspection form at Appendix 11A of the Standards.

Name and designation of inspector(s)	Name of zoo representative(s)
[REDACTED] (S of State Inspector List 1)	Mr Daniel Clark (Licence Holder)
[REDACTED] (Animal Licensing Officer)	Mr Liam McElroy (Licence Holder)

When this form has been completed and signed the original must be sent to the local authority. If the zoo is owned by the local authority, the local authority must send a copy of the completed form to Defra where the zoo is situated in England or to the Welsh Government, where the zoo is situated in Wales.

Preamble to inspectors' report

Information and guidance about the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 (ZLA) is available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/protecting-biodiversity-and-ecosystems-at-home-and-abroad/supporting-pages/species-protection> and <http://wales.gov.uk/topics/environmentcountryside/ahw/zoos/?lang=en>

Preamble to inspectors' report*, including any comments about the current dispensation status, if applicable.

The inspecting team (which is hereafter sometimes referred to as "we") should like to thank Daniel Clark and Liam McElroy for their welcome and openness during the inspection.

We made clear from the outset our awareness of the adverse effects that the COVID-19 pandemic and its sequelae might have had on small zoos such as the UK Owl and Raptor Centre (hereafter sometimes referred to as "the Centre" or "the zoo"). In the circumstances, we were impressed by the way the UK Owl and Raptor Centre has coped in terms not only of animal care but also making some changes and improvements to the facilities.

Before the inspecting team toured the premises, the proposed programme of work was discussed and documents were reviewed.

Our initial impressions of the collection were favourable. A thorough inspection of the premises was carried out. The staff were helpful and open to answering the inspectors' questions. The collection appeared to be adequately maintained and the measures in place were largely appropriate for the size of the premises.

The current 14(2) dispensation is still applicable.

We were sorry that the Centre's new veterinary surgeon, [REDACTED] could not be present on the day of our inspection but we were told that she was due to visit soon and would then be able to address a number of our suggestions and queries.

This inspection report is written in accordance with the instructions found in the current version of the 'Guidance for zoo inspectors 2019' which was issued on the 21st January 2019 and clarifies that, where there has been any, however small, failure of compliance, then a question is marked 'No'. Where a box is marked 'No', the specific area of non-compliance is explained.

This report is based upon the findings and information received in association with the formal inspection that took place on 26th November 2024.

We have inserted a number of Comments and Recommendations. These are not legally-binding and the collection can decide whether it will follow or ignore them. They are included as constructive advice and to encourage the UK Owl and Raptor Centre staff in their endeavours.

*this might include general background about the zoo (type of collection, size etc) and any relevant information or comments from the pre-inspection audit

Findings at inspection

Guidance note: Where possible a Yes, No or Not Applicable (N/A) answer should be given. Where not all criteria are met for a particular question, comments and clarification should be made indicating where any deficits occur. If appropriate, means of correction or improvement should be included as Conditions or Recommendations under 'Additional conditions' or 'Additional space' towards the end of the form.

1. Provision of food and water	Marking Yes No N/A	Comments/clarification
Section 1A(c)(ii) ZLA 1981:		
1.1. Are animals provided with a high standard of nutrition?	Yes	
1.2. Is food and drink that is supplied appropriate for the species/individual?	Yes	
1.3. Are supplies of food and water:		
(a) kept hygienically?	Yes	
(b) prepared hygienically?	Yes	
(c) supplied to the animal hygienically?	Yes	
1.4. Has natural feeding behaviour been adequately considered to ensure that all animals have access to food and drink?	Yes	
1.5. Are feeding methods safe for staff and animals?	Yes	
1.6. Is feeding by visitors permitted?	Yes	
(a) if 'yes', is it properly controlled?	Yes	
2. Provision of suitable environment		
Section 1A(c)(i) ZLA 1981:		
2.1. Are the animals provided with an environment well adapted to meet the physical, psychological and social needs of the species to which they belong?	Yes	There is a current active planning application in place for the wider site, which will involve the zoo premises moving to another area on the estate. The Local Authority (LA) is to be kept updated with developments of this move. A Special Inspection will be required.
2.2. Are the following environmental parameters appropriate:		
(a) temperature?	Yes	
(b) ventilation?	Yes	
(c) lighting?	Yes	
(d) noise levels?	Yes	
(e) any other environmental parameters?	Yes	

2. Provision of suitable environment (contd.)	Marking Yes No N/A	Comments/clarification
2.3. Are there satisfactory measures in place to safely confine the animals?	Yes	Recommendation 1 - When the Centre has moved to its new location, it is recommended that all aviaries have a double door/gate system in place to help prevent birds from escaping.
2.4. Do animal enclosures have sufficient shelter and refuge areas?	Yes	
2.5. Do animal enclosures provide sufficient space?	Yes	
2.6. Are backup facilities for life support systems adequate?	N/A	
2.7. Is the cleaning of the accommodation satisfactory?	Yes	
2.8. Is the standard of maintenance adequate for: (a) the buildings?	Yes	
(b) the fences?	Yes	
2.9. Is all drainage effective and safe?	Yes	
3. Provision of animal health care		
Section 1A(c)(ii) ZLA 1981:		
3.1. Are the animals provided with a high standard of animal husbandry?	Yes	
3.2. Do animals on display to the public appear in good health?	Yes	
3.3. Are observations of condition and health made and recorded?	Yes	See Recommendation 2 - Times of observations should be recorded on the daily sheet.
3.4. Do animals receive prompt and appropriate attention when problems are noted?	Yes	
3.5. Are enclosures designed and operated in such a way that social interaction problems are avoided?	Yes	
On-site facilities		
3.6. Are catch-up and restraint facilities adequate?	Yes	
3.7. Is darting equipment satisfactory?	N/A	
3.8. Are on-site veterinary facilities adequate?	Yes	The Centre is commended on the adequacy and condition of its veterinary treatment room - excellent for a small zoo

3. Provision of animal health care (contd.)	Marking Yes No N/A	Comments/clarification
Veterinary care Section 1A(c)(ii) ZLA 1981: 3.9. Are the animals provided with a documented and maintained programme of preventative and curative veterinary care and nutrition?	Yes	Recommendation 3 - The current veterinary programme in place is compliant. However, the zoo has a new veterinary surgeon (Dr [REDACTED]). This change may alter the original programme that was agreed with the previous veterinarian. It is therefore recommended that the zoo review their original programme in conjunction with [REDACTED] make any necessary amendments and send an updated version to the Local Authority as soon as this review has taken place.
3.10. Is there a system for the regular review of clinical and pathological records?	Yes	See Recommendation 3.
3.11. Are appropriate veterinary records kept?	Yes	
3.12. Are medicines kept and disposed of correctly?	Yes	
3.13. Are controlled drugs used and recorded satisfactorily?	Yes	
3.14. Are appropriate antidotes available?	N/A	
3.15. Are <i>post mortem</i> examination arrangements satisfactory?	Yes	[REDACTED]
Isolation and containment 3.16. Is adequate reserve accommodation available for isolation of animals for: (a) assessment?	Yes	
(b) treatment?	Yes	
(c) recovery?	Yes	
(d) quarantine (where required)?	Yes	
Sanitation and control of disease Section 1A(e) ZLA 1981: 3.17. Are satisfactory measures in place to prevent the intrusion of pests and vermin into the zoo premises?	Yes	The Centre is commended for not using any types of pesticides or poisons in their pest control. The current pest control reports state that the majority of possible pests in the location are bank voles, and monitoring boxes are in place. See Recommendation 4 - The Centre should consider using 'Longworth' traps for in-situ studies of local small mammals.
3.18. Does it appear that general sanitation and pest control are effective?	Yes	

4. Provision of an opportunity to express most normal behaviour	Marking Yes No N/A	Comments/clarification
4.1. Do the accommodation and management regimes encourage normal behaviour patterns and minimise any abnormal behaviour, taking into account current enrichment and husbandry guidelines?	Yes	
4.2. Are animals of social species normally maintained in compatible social groups?	Yes	
5. Provision of protection from fear and distress		
5.1. Are the animals handled only by or under the supervision of appropriately experienced staff?	Yes	
5.2. Is physical contact between animals and the public consistent with the animals' welfare?	Yes	
5.3. Are interactions between the animals such that they are not excessively stressful?	Yes	
6. Transportation and movement of live animals		
6.1. Can the zoo demonstrate a knowledge of, and compliance with, the regulations covering transportation of animals, and provide copies of certificates to show compliance when transportation has occurred?	Yes	
6.2. Can the zoo demonstrate that:	Yes	
i) transport and movement equipment is in good order?	Yes	
ii) facilities suitable for lifting, crating and transportation of all the types of animals kept within the zoo to destinations both inside and outside the zoo are readily available?	Yes	
iii) catching and transportation techniques take account of the animal's temperament and escape behaviour in order to minimise injury, damage and distress?	Yes	
iv) adequate provision is made for the animal's and the public's safety and well-being while the animal is being transported or kept away from the zoo?	Yes	

7. Conservation, education and research	Marking Yes No N/A	Comments/clarification
<p>Section 1A(a) ZLA 1981:</p> <p>7.1. Is the zoo participating in at least one of the following:</p> <p>(i) research from which conservation benefits accrue to species of wild animals?</p> <p>(ii) training in relevant conservation skills?</p> <p>(iii) the exchange of information relating to the conservation of species of wild animals?</p> <p>iv) where appropriate, breeding of wild animals in captivity?</p> <p>(v) where appropriate, the repopulation of an area with, or the reintroduction into the wild of, wild animals?</p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>Yes</p> <p>No</p> <p>Yes</p>	<p>The zoo is commended for their conservation work involving invasive plants, nest boxes, bird surveys and their 'Wildflower Patch' Initiative. They are also working alongside 'Wild Groombridge'.</p>
<p>Section 1A(b) ZLA 1981:</p> <p>7.2. Is the zoo promoting public education and awareness in relation to the conservation of biodiversity, in particular by providing information about the species of wild animals kept in the zoo and their natural habitats?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>The Centre is commended for taking part in numerous visits to schools and care homes to educate members of the public about birds of prey. The staff also undertake 'Evening with Owls' talks in local village halls as a part of their education programme.</p> <p>Daniel Clark is commended for being a member of the 'International Association of Avian Trainers and Educators' and 'International Zoo Educators'.</p>
<p>7.3. Where appropriate are animals managed in a way consistent with the conservation needs of the species, (such as exchange between zoos, accommodation to encourage natural behaviour and breeding etc)?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	
<p>7.4. Are on-site education facilities adequate for the resources of the collection?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	<p>Most of the education work is carried out during onsite and offsite experiences and displays. See Recommendation 5. The Centre should have hardcopy material (e.g. research papers) available for viewing by staff and visitors - an onsite library.</p>
<p>7.5. Are the conservation efforts adequate for the resources of the collection?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	
<p>7.6. Are the research efforts adequate for the resources of the collection?</p>	<p>No</p>	<p>See Recommendation 6 regarding research.</p>
<p>7.7. Is captive breeding properly managed?</p>	<p>Yes</p>	

8. Public safety	Marking Yes No N/A	Comments/clarification
Section 1A(d) ZLA 1981:		See Recommendation 1.
8.1. Are there satisfactory measures in place to prevent the escape of animals?	Yes	
8.2. Are there satisfactory measures in place to be taken in the event of any escape or unauthorised release of animals?	Yes	
8.3. Are escape drills carried out four times a year, recorded and regularly reviewed (at least two drills should include the escape of a Category 1 animal where present)?	Yes	
8.4. Will the perimeter deter unauthorised entry and aid the confinement of zoo stock?	Yes	
8.5. Do stand-off barriers appear adequate?	N/A	
8.6. Are adequate warning signs provided?	Yes	
8.7. Are prohibited areas appropriately signed?	Yes	
8.8. Are exits clearly marked and accessible?	Yes	
8.9. Do public areas, walkways and buildings appear safe?	Yes	
8.10. Are trees regularly inspected and appropriate remedial action taken?	Yes	Reports seen up until November 2024.
8.11. Have appropriate risk assessments for direct contact by the public with animals been carried out?	Yes	
8.12. Are the special safety requirements for walk-through or drive-through exhibits adequately met?	N/A	

9. Records	Marking Yes No N/A	Comments/clarification
Section 1A(f) ZLA 1981:		The zoo is now using ZIMS and the operators' use and knowledge of ZIMS is commendable, considering that it has only recently started to be used.
9.1. Are there up-to-date records of the zoo's collection, including records of:		
(i) the numbers of different animals?	Yes	See above
(ii) acquisitions, births, deaths, disposals and escapes of animals?	Yes	
(iii) the causes of any such deaths?	Yes	
(iv) the health of the animals?	Yes	
9.2. Are daily diaries maintained, and do they contain appropriate information?	Yes	
9.3. Are animal stock records clear and up-to-date?	Yes	
9.4. Are annual stock records completed in the correct format and submitted to the local authority?	Yes	
9.5. Are animal source and destination records kept?	Yes	
9.6. Are archived records secure?	Yes	Moving over to ZIMS, but paper currently kept in locked office.
10. Miscellaneous		
10.1. Do staff numbers and training of staff appear adequate?	Yes	Daniel and Liam (Managers/Licence holders) both FT. One member of staff (Degree in Animal Management) PT/ad-hoc.
10.2. Is the management structure and organisation of staff adequate to ensure compliance with the Standards at all times?	Yes	
10.3. Are effective risk assessments carried out where appropriate?	Yes	
10.4. Has an ethical review process been established and implemented?	Yes	See Comment regarding ethical review.
10.5. Are public toilet facilities adequate and serviced?	Yes	
10.6. Are parking facilities adequate?	Yes	
10.7. Is a First Aid policy and accident reporting and recording system in place?	Yes	

11. Associated legislation	Marking Yes No N/A	Comments/clarification
11.1. Is electrical equipment routinely serviced?	Yes	
11.2. Have fire precautions been agreed and implemented?	Yes	
11.3. Is refuse and clinical waste disposed of correctly?	Yes	
11.4. Are the required needs of disabled visitors met?	Yes	
12. Compliance check including licence conditions		
12.1. Is the current licence or a copy on public display at each public entrance?	Yes	
12.2. Is adequate Public Liability Insurance current?	Yes	Current and on display in office.
12.3. Have any Additional licence conditions been met?	Yes	All the Conditions from previous inspections have been met.

Additional space

The following space is provided for:

- additional notes and comments on the answers to the earlier questions
- recommendations (other than in respect of grant or refusal of a licence and any specific conditions recommended for a licence) including those based on comments already made to earlier questions
- any general remarks which the inspecting team may wish to record

Recommendation 1 - When the Centre has moved to its new location, all aviaries should have a double-door/gate system in place to help prevent birds from escaping.

Recommendation 2 - The staff should record times of observations (using the 24-hour clock) on the daily sheet in order to help ensure that animals and systems are seen to receive prompt attention.

Recommendation 3 - The current veterinary programme in place is compliant. However, the zoo has a new veterinary surgeon [REDACTED]. This change may alter the original programme that was agreed with the previous veterinarian. It is therefore recommended that the zoo review their original programme in conjunction with [REDACTED], make any necessary amendments and send an updated version to the Local Authority.

Recommendation 4 - The Centre should consider using 'Longworth' traps for in-situ studies of local small mammals. See: <https://www.nhbs.com>

Recommendation 5 - The Centre should have hardcopy material (e.g. research papers) available for viewing by staff and visitors - an onsite library.

Recommendation 6. The Centre's contribution to research is, at present, minimal. Some tasks relating to the health and welfare of the birds might well be best tackled by developing appropriate projects. As was pointed out during the inspection, the collection offers countless opportunities for useful research projects – for instance, the routine collection and examination of feathers, pellets and eggshells. Such studies could yield useful and probably publishable research results and material suitable for the presentation of lectures. At the same time, the results would provide valuable additional information about the health status of the collection.

Other general remarks ("Comments"):

We were told that the Centre is looking into BIAZA and EAZA membership. Affiliation with other bodies might also be considered, especially organisation concerned with birds of prey, such as the Hawk and Owl Trust <https://hawkandowltrust.org> and those involved in local conservation activities such as the Kent Wildlife Trust <https://www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk>

Staff should be encouraged to attend courses and workshops in order to enhance their knowledge and personal development.

We were pleased to learn that there is a lay/independent member of the Centre's Ethics Committee. Consideration should be given to holding more frequent meetings, rotating the chairmanship and membership at intervals, and cover a wider range of evolving, sometimes contentious, issues.

No live vertebrates are used as food; however, at times live invertebrates are provided. The team discussed the situation regarding the need to consider the welfare of such invertebrates, especially those that are not eaten promptly.

Inspecting team’s recommendation to the local authority

Having inspected (name of zoo) UK Owl and Raptor Centre

on: 26th November 2024

the inspecting team make the following recommendation: Please tick appropriate box

- it is recommended that a licence be refused..... ☐
- it is recommended that the above collection be licensed in accordance with the ZLA 1981 subject to the conservation measures in section 1A ☐
- it is recommended that the above collection be licensed in accordance with the ZLA 1981 subject to the conservation measures in section 1A and the following Additional Conditions (N.B Additional Conditions must be clearly worded so as to be enforceable and a timescale applied for compliance) ☐
- it is recommended that the following alterations be made to the above collection’s licence conditions ☐

Additional Conditions (if appropriate)

Inspector(s) signature(s)

Date signed

03/12/2024

03/12/2024

The Data Protection Act 1998 – Fair Processing Notice

The purpose of this Fair Processing Notice is to inform you of the use that will be made of your personal data, as required by the Data Protection Act 1998.

The local authority in England (or in Wales as the case may be) is the data controller in respect of any personal data that you provide when you complete this zoo inspection form. The information that you provide may be used by the local authority in its consideration of issuing or amending a zoo licence in accordance with the Zoo Licensing Act 1981 (ZLA). The local authority may be required to release information, including personal data and commercial information, on request under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (EIRs) or the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA). However, local authorities will not permit any unwarranted breach of confidentiality nor act in contravention of their obligations under the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA).

Where the zoo, to which this inspection report applies, is owned by the local authority, the local authority must send a copy of the completed form to Defra (in accordance with section 13(2) of the ZLA) where the zoo is situated in England, or to the Welsh Government where the zoo is situated in Wales. Defra or the Welsh Government (as the case may be) may use the information contained in the form to ensure that local authorities are carrying out their duties correctly in accordance with the ZLA.

Defra and the Welsh Government are also subject to the EIRs and the FOIA and so may be required to release information, including personal data and commercial information, on request. However, as above, Defra and the Welsh Government will not permit any unwarranted breach of confidentiality nor act in contravention of their obligations under the DPA.