Welcome to the Saving Species Conference 2026

Welcome to the Saving Species Conference, a friendly and engaging event that brings together people who are passionate about wildlife, biodiversity, and the conservation of our natural world.

At Conservation Chat UK Ltd, we believe conservation events should be inclusive, welcoming, and full of community spirit — never formal or intimidating. This conference has been designed as a relaxed space where people from all walks of life can come together to share research, experiences, ideas, and inspiration, whether you are a conservation professional, student, researcher, wildlife enthusiast, or simply someone who cares about protecting our planet's incredible diversity of life.

This year's event brings together a fantastic range of speakers, experts, organisations, and nature advocates who are dedicated to protecting species and preserving the natural world for future generations. We hope you enjoy the conference, make new connections, discover fresh ideas, and leave feeling inspired to continue supporting and championing the conservation of the species we share our planet with.

www.conservationchatuk.com

About Conservation Chat UK Ltd

Stu and Laura, the directors of Conservation Chat UK Ltd, are passionate about the natural world and have extensive experience working with animals, conservation, and environmental education. Conservation Chat UK Ltd was created to provide an engaging platform for communicating conservation, science, and environmental issues in an accessible and inclusive way.

We host a range of conferences, workshops, webinars, and educational events, with conservation at the heart of everything we do. We aim to connect people through a shared passion for wildlife, nature, and the protection of the planet.

You can explore our full range of events on Eventbrite

Housekeeping

Fire Safety	No fire alarm drills are planned during the conference. Please ensure you pay close attention to the safety briefing at the start of the event and take a moment to familiarise yourself with the nearest exits. In the unlikely event of a fire alarm, please leave the building calmly and promptly using the nearest available exit, following any instructions from staff.
Wifi	Name: BxLaboratory Guest Wifi
	Password: WelcometobrixhamLab
Refreshments	This is a 'bring your own' lunch event, and we encourage you to help us keep the day as low-impact as possible by going single-use plastic free. A selection of light refreshments will be available. In line with our commitment to reducing environmental impact, these options are vegetarian or plant-based, with gluten-free options available on request — please speak to a member of our team. There is an onsite café, and a range of local eateries nearby if you would prefer to leave the venue for lunch.
Questions	We welcome questions at the end of each talk. Please keep questions brief so that speakers are able to answer as many as possible. We encourage a range of viewpoints and discussion, but ask that all questions are respectful towards our speakers and their work.
Timekeeping	Speakers: We kindly ask all speakers to keep to their allocated time slots to ensure the programme runs smoothly and on schedule. Guests: To help the event run smoothly, please return to your seats promptly when you hear the bell.
Social media	The event hashtag is **#savespecies26** and we welcome you to share your experience and conference content on social media. If you appear in any official content shared by Conservation Chat UK Ltd and would like it removed in line with our privacy policy, please contact us at conservationchat@outlook.com with clear details of the content in question.
Networking	We warmly welcome networking throughout the conference. Whatever your background or level of experience, we encourage you to connect with others, share knowledge, and take part in conversations about how we can work together to protect and preserve the natural environment.
Event feedback	We welcome your feedback and value your thoughts on the event. Please share your comments via our online feedback form.

Agenda & Talk Summaries

Day One - Thursday 29th October 2026	
9:30 - 10:00	**Arrival and registration**
10:00 - 10:10	**House Keeping and welcome - Stuart & Laura Collier - Directors Conservation Chat UK Ltd**
10:10 - 10:35	**Preparing students for careers in conservation - Dr Holly Farmer & Clare Rugg, Paignton Zoo & University of Plymouth** To help graduates stand out in the conservation sector they need the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience to support career development. Twenty years ago, the MSc in Zoo and Aquarium Conservation Biology was developed to bring together zoo biology, management and husbandry topics to Masters-level study in a collaboration between the University of Plymouth and Paignton Zoo. The programme has evolved to include topics pertinent to future conservationists such as reintroduction and small population management and recent changes focus on the and aquatic industry, bringing in partners such as the National Marine Aquarium. We will introduce the course and how industry-specific knowledge, specialist training and practical experience provide the ideal basis for a career in the sector. The session will also highlight career pathways in zoos, aquariums, wildlife organisations and research institutions, and demonstrate how postgraduate study can help prepare students.
10:35 - 11:00	**Lepidoptera in the landscape- managing farmland for species recovery - Nathan Prescott, Butterfly Conservation Trust** Agricultural land use dominates the UK landscape and has been a principal driver of long-term declines in Lepidoptera, largely through habitat loss and degradation. However, agricultural systems also present the greatest opportunity for large-scale species recovery if managed with a clear understanding of the underlying ecological mechanisms. This talk uses butterflies and moths as model taxa to examine how different agricultural practices either constrain or facilitate population persistence within farmed landscapes.
11:00 - 11:25	**The return of the black-veined white butterfly - Simon Roper, Ambios Ltd** The idea came during a brain-storm on a car journey. What followed was a fast moving roller coaster or practical and emotional ups and down. This is the story of the why, what, where, when and how we're trying to return a butterfly to Devon after 164 years, and counting! A chilling journey which encounters annoying parasites, giant caterpillars, predatory slugs and devastated hawthorn plants. This story is unfolding in real-time, right now. This talk will reveal the latest news.
11:25 - 11:55	**Refreshments break and networking opportunity**
11:55 - 12:20	**Native Conservation at Dartmoor Zoo - Dave Gibson, Dartmoor Zoological Park** Dave's talk will focus on the range of relatively low cost but high impact conservation projects involving UK species that Dartmoor Zoo is involved in and the partners they are working with to deliver these results. As one of the world's most nature depleted countries our native UK species need our help. UK conservation doesn't just need to focus on charismatic predator species but we also need to look at how we can support the bottom of the food web and provide practical advice on how the general public can make choices in their own lives to help nature.
12:20 - 12:45	**Saving Our Spiky Neighbours: The Future of European Hedgehogs - Dawn Powley, Griffiths Veterinary Centre** From a young age, I have always had a passion for wildlife, but my love for the European hedgehog truly began when I was just 15 years old, volunteering with a local hedgehog rehabilitation. Seeing these incredible little animals up close and the challenges they face every day inspired me to dedicate my studies towards wildlife conservation. This passion led me to study International Wildlife Biology, where I focused my dissertation on investigating whether European hedgehogs are affected by the presence of red foxes (Vulpus vulpus) and European badgers (Meles meles) in urban and rural areas across the UK. Through both my academic research and hands on rehabilitation experience, one thing became increasingly clear: our hedgehogs are in serious decline and something needs to change. In this talk, I'll explore why Britain's beloved spiky friends are becoming endangered, the threats they face in modern landscapes and what we can all do to help protect their future before it's too late.

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Day One - Thursday 29th October 2026	
12:45 - 12:55	**Speed networking**
12:55 - 13:55	**Lunch and networking**
13:55 - 14:20	**Wildlife Cryobanking: Preserving Genetic Diversity for Conservation - Debbie Rolmanis, Nature's Safe** This presentation will explore how wildlife cryobanking can support species survival by safeguarding genetic diversity, enabling advanced reproductive technologies and providing biological resources for scientific research. Drawing on examples from Nature's SAFE's collaborative work with zoos, wildlife parks, veterinarians and conservation organisations, the talk will demonstrate how opportunistic sample collection, cryopreservation and emerging assisted reproductive technologies can be used as vital tools for conservation.
14:20 - 14:25	**Day Two - What to expect.**
14:25 - 14:50	**TProject White Hart - Can we help save England's Vanishing Chalk Stream Salmon? Curtis Williams, Atlantic Salmon Trust.** Chalk rivers are one of the rarest freshwater habitats in the world, and a small group of these rivers are still home to Atlantic Salmon. But these salmon populations are under threat and have seen downward spiral in numbers in recent years. Can Project White Hart, a new(ish) salmon recovery project, drive forward salmon recovery across the Test, Itchen and Meon catchments? This talk will look at the main impacts currently threatening these salmon population, touch on the project's plan moving forward towards the restoration plan, and outline how we are trying to establish mechanisms via partnership working to achieve big things.
14:50 - 15:15	**Refreshments break and networking opportunity.**
15:15 - 15:45	**The Hidden Footprint of Everyday Products, Laura Collier, Conservation Chat UK Ltd** We use everyday products without much thought about where they end up, but many can have unexpected impacts on wildlife and ecosystems. From skincare and sunscreens to cleaning products and clothing, small choices at home can add up in meaningful ways in the natural world. This talk looks at some common examples, including sunscreen and reef health, and explores how everyday habits connect to the environments we care about. It also highlights simple, realistic alternatives and considerations that can help reduce impact without major lifestyle changes.
15:45 - 16:00	**Thank you, final networking, summary, and conference close.**

Agenda & Talk Summaries

Day Two - Friday 30th October 2026	
9:30 - 10:00	**Arrival and registration**
10:00 - 10:10	**House Keeping and welcome - Stuart Collier/Laura Roberts - Directors Conservation Chat UK Ltd**
10:10 - 10:35	**Beyond the Goals: Conservation Priorities - Stu Collier, Conservation Chat UK Ltd** The UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set ambitious targets for protecting people and the planet by 2030. But how much progress has been made, and what challenges remain? In this engaging talk, Stu will explore the current state of the Global Goals, with a particular focus on SDG 14: Life Below Water and SDG 15: Life on Land. Stu will examine successes, setbacks, and emerging conservation priorities, while considering the actions needed beyond the 2030 deadline to secure a sustainable future for nature and wildlife.
10:35 - 11:00	**Bridging the Gap Between Wildlife Health, Welfare and Conservation - Lainy Miller, Wilder International** This presentation will explore the work of Wilder International in supporting sanctuaries and rescue centres worldwide to build capacity and improve animal welfare, while also contributing to biodiversity conservation in the UK. It will examine how integrating wildlife health, welfare, and conservation into a unified approach can provide a more holistic framework for addressing environmental health challenges.
11:00 - 11:25	**Refreshments break and networking opportunity**
11:25 - 11:55	**Saving Devon's Native Crayfish, Juliet Landeman, Wildwood Trust** The white-clawed crayfish is the UK's only native crayfish species, but it is globally endangered and in decline due to the invasive American signal crayfish, pollution and habitat loss. Wildwood Trust and its project partners are working to monitor and rescue remaining white-clawed crayfish, find safe ark sites and breed a captive population for reintroductions. Hear how our project is conserving the two remaining populations in Devon, and what you can do to help
11:55 - 12:20	**Life on the Edge - Rob Skinner and Samuel Skevington, Life on the Edge Project** This talk will discuss our project's target species, their habitat requirements, and how that relates to land management and the economic, social, and environmental pressures on these important habitats.

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Day Two - Friday 30th October 2026	
12:20 - 12:55	**25 Years of Species Recovery - David Appleton, Natural England** Using examples of projects that David has been have been involved in over the last 25 years, this presentation will explore the achievements in species conservation across the South West. David will explain how the early landscape scale projects were developed, the influence of the Lawton review and more recently, how government targets in the Environmental Improvement Plan have shaped our approach to species conservation and maybe brings a brighter future for some of our rare and threatened species.
12:55 - 13:55	**Lunch and networking**
13:55 - 14:05	**Speed networking**
14:05 - 14:30	**Possible regime shift in the Western English Channel: How the natural and anthropogenic drivers combine to change the oceans - Simon Thomas, Fisheries and Marine Ecologist Consultant** Simon Thomas explores how natural processes and human activities may be combining to drive major ecological changes in the Western English Channel, examining the potential for a regime shift and its implications for marine ecosystems.
14:30 - 14:55	**Towards a transformation - evidence-based practice in conservation - Andrew Bowkett, University of Plymouth** Conservation decisions which ignore the best available evidence risk wasting money, undermining public support and alienating funders. Evidence-based practice transformed fields like medicine and aviation safety during the last century, and a growing movement aims to do the same for nature conservation. Conservation Evidence, based at the University of Cambridge, has built a website summarising evidence of the effectiveness of over 4,000 management actions, found from scanning over 1.2 million articles. This talk will introduce the process of subject-wide evidence synthesis and detail experiences using this approach to integrate the ex situ conservation work of zoos with Conservation Evidence. There are many challenges to embedding the use of evidence in conservation practice, but the benefits, ultimately, could be transformative.
14:55 - 15:20	**Refreshments break and networking opportunity**
15:20 - 15:45	**Delegate activity - Return of the Lynx - your thoughts**
15:45 - 16:00	**Thank you, final networking, summary, and conference close**

Upcoming Conferences

Don't miss out on Earlybird tickets for our Summer conference!



Scan the QR code or visit Eventbrite to book your seat!