



Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust

PRESS INFORMATION



DURRELL WILDLIFE CONSERVATION TRUST

Facts

Address	Les Augrès Manor, La Profonde Rue, Trinity, Jersey, JE3 5BP, Channel Islands
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Location	Trinity, Jersey, Channel Islands
Website	www.durrell.org
E-mail	info@durrell.org
Opened	1959 as Jersey Zoo, incorporated as charitable trust in 1963
Founder	Gerald Durrell
Honorary Director	Lee Durrell
CEO	Paul Masterton
Number of projects worldwide	More than 40 major projects in 17 countries for 48 species
Number of species in Jersey	Over 130 animal species
Size of Jersey headquarters	Over 32 acres
Number of visitors per year	169,000
Facilities	International Training Centre The Princess Royal Pavilion Veterinary Centre Organic Farm
Admission	See separate sheet
Public Relations	Omnia PR (UK)

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Admission Information

Durrell's Jersey headquarters are open every day of the year except Christmas Day.

- Summer Season: **09:30 to 18:00**
- Winter Season: **09:30 to 17:00**

As an international charity, the money raised by ticket entry helps our conservation programmes both at our Jersey headquarters and with our international programmes.

- **Adult:**
£12.90- feeds Ya Kwanza, our 245kg silverback gorilla for 2 days
- **OAP:**
£10.50- feeds our pair of Andean bears for 1 day
- **Child (4-16 years):**
£9.40- feeds a baby pygmy hog for 6 weeks in our breeding centre in Assam, NE India
- **Student 17-22 years:**
£10.50- produces one training manual for our international students in Endangered Species Management
- **Family (2 adults + 2 children):**
£39.95- pays for a field assistant to monitor iguana nest sites in St Lucia for 3 days
- **Family annual membership:**
£100.00- buys a Global Positioning System for field workers in Madagascar
- **Child under 4 years:**
FREE

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Gerald Durrell

Gerald Durrell was born in Jamshedpur, India, on 7th January 1925. Following the death of his father in 1928 the family moved back to the UK, but spurred on by Gerald's oldest brother, Lawrence, they soon returned to a warmer climate, this time the island of Corfu.

Here Gerald Durrell's interest in animals and all things living blossomed, fuelled by a friendship with Dr Theodore Stephanides, whose fascination with the animal world inspired the 10-year-old Gerald.

In 1939, with a war looming, the Durrell family moved back to the UK and settled in the coastal town of Bournemouth. Gerald started working in a local pet shop and then as a stable-hand and riding instructor. After the war, he became a student keeper at the Zoological Society of London's Whipsnade Park to gain experience with a wider variety of animals.

On his 21st birthday, Gerald inherited £3000 which he used to finance his first animal collecting expedition. For the next ten years he travelled the world collecting animals for the major British zoological gardens. Encouraged by his older brother Lawrence, he took up a second career as a writer, publishing his first book, 'The Overloaded Ark', in 1953. In his lifetime he wrote 37 books, including the best-seller 'My Family and Other Animals', which humorously documented his childhood years in Corfu. The book, which has never been out of print since it was published in 1956, has been translated into 31 languages and sold millions of copies worldwide.

In February 1951, aged 26, Gerald married Jaqueline Rasen, who accompanied him on numerous expeditions. Although the couple separated in 1976, it was Jaqueline who encouraged Gerry to follow his dream and create his own zoo with the animals he collected.

In the mid-50s, to the despair of local neighbours, Gerald filled his sister's back garden in Bournemouth with exotic animals, but without having anywhere to take them. Following an unsuccessful two-year search for a site in England, Gerald eventually came to the Channel Islands where a retired major's house turned out to be the perfect place for his zoo. The Jersey Zoo opened to the public on 26th March 1959.

Built on 32 acres of beautiful farmland the Jersey Zoo has grown into an internationally renowned conservation organisation, fulfilling Gerald's original dream of creating a safe haven for animals.

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Since 1963, when the “zoo” was turned into a charitable trust, the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust has established breeding groups of many species of endangered mammals, birds, reptiles and amphibians, and pioneered the return of their progeny to the wild.

In 1977, whilst on a lecture tour, Gerald met Lee McGeorge, an instructor of zoology at Duke University in the US, where she was studying for a PhD. Following their marriage in 1979, they travelled the world together, visiting various conservation projects, making television programmes, giving lectures on conservation and collecting animals for breeding programmes in Jersey.

Gerald Durrell died on January 30th 1995, in Jersey, aged 70. He left an indelible mark on the conservation world and a valuable legacy for future generations. His mission and vision continue through the tireless work of Durrell’s dedicated conservationists throughout the world, and his wife, Lee, who succeeded him as Honorary Director.

“His most important contribution to zoology was in the field of animal conservation and what became known as Durrell’s Army- the people he ‘trained’ from around the world to go back to their own countries and save animals for themselves.”

-Desmond Morris

Honours and Honorary Degrees

1956 Fellow of the International Institute of Arts and Letters

1974 Fellow of the Institute of Biology - London

1976 Diploma de Honour - Argentine Society for the Protection of Animals

1977 LHD - Doctor of Humane Letters - Yale University

1981 Officer of the Golden Ark

1982 O.B.E. - Order of the British Empire

1988 DSc. - Doctor of Science - University of Durham

1988 Richard Hooper Day Medal - Academy of Natural Science, Philadelphia

1989 DSc. - Doctor of Science- University of Kent, Canterbury

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“Remember that the animals and plants have no MP they can write to; they can't perform sit-down strikes or, indeed, strikes of any sort; they have nobody to speak for them except us, the human beings who share the world with them but do not own it”.

-Gerald Durrell

Gerald Durrell started out with a vision to create a stationary ark, a reservoir in which animals in need of protection could be kept and bred. Today, the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, headquartered in Jersey, has made a difference to more than 30 endangered species worldwide, and continues to maintain a record unparalleled by any organisation of its size.

The variety and complexity of life, our 'biodiversity', is what makes the Earth habitable for humans. Yet, even as we begin to understand what is at stake, this biodiversity is rapidly being lost. The loss of species from this complex web weakens ecosystems, making them more vulnerable to shocks and disturbances, and less able to supply humans with the services we need to survive.

By saving species the Trust has not only supported the maintenance of these vital ecosystem functions, but by also working with local communities, has strengthened conservation capacity in the countries concerned.

Durrell's strength is its commitment to achieving practical results by integrating what it does at its Jersey headquarters with what it does in its sites around the world. Broadly speaking, the Trust's international work takes place on two levels, one being the direct work undertaken in the animals' home countries, and the other being the work conducted in Jersey, with innovative results in breeding and research on endangered species, as well as the training of conservation professionals. Durrell's International Training Centre has seen more than 1700 graduates from over 120 countries pass through its doors, taking much-needed conservation expertise back to their home countries.

Overall, Durrell's conservation programme is currently focusing on more than 40 projects, working with 48 species, in 17 countries. At present, the Trust is undertaking wildlife conservation projects in the following areas: Caribbean Islands, Galapagos, India, Indian Ocean, Madagascar and Jersey.

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Threats to biodiversity are still low on the agenda of most governments, and the conservation community does not have the resources to overcome all of them. Careful prioritisation of conservation actions is required.

In 2007 the Trust launched *TopSpots*, a scientific identification of 200 places in the world in most urgent need of attention. Making up just 18% of the world's terrestrial surface but containing 77% of the world's endemic species, these 200 *TopSpots* provide the main focus for the Trust's work. Its aim is to become the world's foremost organisation devoted to the hands-on management of rare and endangered populations of animals in these *TopSpots*.

2009 is a special year for Durrell, not just because of its 50th anniversary, but because it is also the year for embarking upon an ambitious vision for the future. The vision, unveiled by the Trust in 2008, is a groundbreaking redevelopment plan that aims to establish Durrell firmly as a global centre of excellence in conservation, applied research and training. Once realised, the vision will take the Trust's headquarters from being one destination among many in Jersey to an established world-class destination in its own right, demonstrating the immense value of the planet's biodiversity and inspiring people to cherish and protect it.

Ultimately, Durrell's aim is to:

- **Save** more endangered species worldwide
- **Enable** its own cadre of world-class specialist conservationists across all Durrell sites to become more effective in saving species
- **Train** more conservationists worldwide in the theory and practice of rescuing species the Durrell way
- **Teach** children and adults, who visit Durrell in Jersey, to understand why biodiversity is vital, and encourage them to make their personal pledges to protect life on earth.

By giving a voice and a future to those animal species that we as human beings have brought to the brink of extinction, Durrell is sounding an alarm from its base in Jersey to every corner of the world. Durrell is saying "It's time to make a difference. It's time to act now!"

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Durrell's 50th Anniversary Campaign

In 2009 Durrell is 50 years old and we are using this significant landmark to engage with all audiences and to ensure another 50 years of success for the Trust.

Durrell has achieved so much. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. With the planet's biodiversity in peril, what we all do to contribute to the earth's health and wellbeing, including the protection and maintenance of species worldwide, will be critical.

Therefore, Durrell's 50th birthday message is loud and clear. **It's Time!**

- It's time to take action
- It's time to make a difference
- It's time to invest
- It's time to consider the future
- It's time to work with Durrell
- It's time, because time is running out!

The campaign is a rallying call for all audiences to stop, sit up, take notice and be prompted into action.

Educating audiences about the work of Durrell will increase understanding of its vital role. When audiences understand the true value of the Trust it is hoped that they will be encouraged to give, experience or commit to Durrell in 2009 and beyond.

The **It's Time!** campaign will feature on all anniversary year material and advertising, reinforcing the existing Durrell brand. Communications over the course of the year will focus on what Durrell has achieved, what Durrell will achieve in the future and how audiences can get involved to start making a difference, now!

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Durrell's headquarters in Jersey

Situated in 32 acres of beautiful park and farmland, Durrell's headquarters in Jersey is the hub of the Trust's activities and a 'window' to the work of Durrell around the world, where visitors get the opportunity to see some of the planet's most endangered species and learn about how the Trust is working to save them.

The Staff

Durrell, in Jersey, is supported by a 95-strong team of staff, who are highly-qualified and dedicated to saving species from extinction. By studying and observing the animals in their care, Durrell's keeper-conservationists are able to provide the best possible conditions and environment in which these endangered species can breed. The information and understanding this hands-on experience brings can then be used in-situ, helping our teams across the globe apply that knowledge in the field.

The Education Department

An incredibly important part of Durrell's work is raising awareness and educating the next generation about the importance of conservation, wildlife awareness and the environment.

Based at its Jersey headquarters, Durrell's Conservation Education Department provides education for primary school pupils to A' Level students. College and University students' educational needs are catered for by our ITC department.

Durrell's Education Department covers both formal (schools) and informal (visitors and members) activities and lessons.

The International Training Centre

Durrell has been running unique courses in good conservation practice since 1978, when Gerald Durrell created what he called "a mini-university", adjacent to Les Augrès Manor, to provide intensive training to conservation practitioners worldwide. Many students are scientists from developing countries who are in a prime position to save animals from extinction. There are now more than 1700 Durrell graduates from around 120 countries.

Today Durrell is internationally acclaimed for its contribution to the professional training of zoologists and conservation biologists.

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The Veterinary Centre

The Veterinary Centre is responsible for the good health of all the animals the Trust works with and contributes to the high level of its success. The Centre opened in 1978 and is responsible for the constant health-checks of the animals at the Jersey site and overseas. Currently with four full-time staff, the Centre is expanding its approach to study the impacts of disease and ill health on conservation efforts. An on-site laboratory in Jersey, thought to be one of the best zoo labs in Europe, allows screenings to take place with little delay by in-house staff, drastically reducing the time needed to diagnose illness and take action.

The Organic Farm

With operations begun in 1976, the Trust was one of the first establishments of its kind to set up an organic farm to provide the animal collection with foods free of noxious chemicals, using compost derived from the animals themselves. Currently the Trust grows 44 varieties of fruit and vegetables including apple, tomato, runner beans and cucumber alongside more exotic produce like Morelle de Balbis, tamarillo and Cape gooseberry, overall meeting 80% of the animals' green forage needs per year.

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Selected Durrell Successes

- In Jersey, Durrell's major breeding firsts include: aye-ayes, Alaotran gentle lemurs, giant jumping rats, Rodrigues fruit bat, Livingstone's fruit bat, Montserrat oriole, Madagascar teal, St. Lucia amazon parrot, Rodrigues fody, Lesser Antilles iguana, Madagascar flat-tailed tortoise, Round Island boa, Montserrat mountain chicken frog, Round Island skink, Round Island gecko.
- Durrell's captive golden lion tamarins were the first of the re-introduced animals to breed in the wild.
- Durrell was also the first European institution to breed Mauritius kestrel, pink pigeon, Utila Island iguana, spiny terrapins and Asian flower back terrapins.
- Captive breeding firsts in the species' country of origin include the echo parakeet, and Rodrigues fody in Mauritius, the pygmy hog in India, ploughshare tortoise, side-necked turtle and flat-tailed tortoise in Madagascar.
- In India, Durrell's long-term captive breeding programme, communication education and scientific study has led to the first ever re-introduction of the pygmy hog back into its native habitat.
- In Spain, Durrell supported the first successful reintroduction into the wild of the Majorcan midwife toad.
- In Mauritius, through captive breeding, study and reintroduction, the Trust has rescued the kestrel, pink pigeon, echo parakeet, and Rodrigues fody, which were all close to extinction with only a few pairs of each remaining.
- Durrell was responsible for the restoration of Round Island ecosystem, including the removal of invasive animal species and propagation and replanting of native plants.
- Durrell established the Mauritian Wildlife Foundation to support conservation work on Mauritius. This is now the largest environmental NGO on the island and has taken on the conservation of the island's threatened bird, plant and reptile species.
- Durrell's long-term commitment to the conservation of the St. Lucia amazon parrot in St. Lucia led to the restoration of this species from below 100 pairs to a current population of approximately 1000 pairs.
- Durrell was instrumental in the adoption of the Ramsar Convention in Madagascar and led the designation of Lac Alaotra as a wetland of international significance.
- Durrell's *in-situ* conservation activities have directly led to the creation of national parks and protected areas in Montserrat, Madagascar and Mauritius.

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10 Things you didn't know about Durrell

1. Since its opening in 1959, over 13,000 animals have been born at Durrell.
2. Durrell's organic farm produces 80% of the greens needed to feed its animals.
3. Durrell has an on-site veterinary centre and laboratory.
4. Durrell has more than 40 projects in 17 countries for 48 animal species.
5. Two Durrell staff members have been recognised in the Queen's Birthday Honours; Prof Carl Jones MBE and Jeremy Mallinson OBE.
6. The first person to receive training at Durrell came to the Trust in 1977 and went on to become the head of the National Parks Department in Mauritius.
7. Durrell was the key partner in saving four of 16 bird species from extinction between 1994 and 2004.
8. Since 1959 Durrell has bred over 420 Meller's ducks, 350 Mallorcan midwife toads, 330 Round Island boas, 535 Jamaican boas, 440 Mauritius pink pigeons, 715 Bali starlings, 351 Rodrigues fruit bats, 156 Madagascar teal, 133 pied tamarins, 41 gentle lemurs, 21 western lowland gorillas and 10 Sumatran orangutans.
9. Durrell not only saves animals from extinction but plants too.
10. Gerald Durrell's ashes are buried in the ground of the Trust under a memorial plaque with a quote from William Beebe, 1906, which reads: "*The beauty and genius of a work of art may be reconceived, though its first material expression be destroyed; a vanished harmony may yet again inspire the composer; but when the last individual of a race of living beings breathes no more, another heaven and another earth must pass before such a one can be again.*"

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Interview:

Durrell - Nature's Louvre

Name: Professor John E. Fa

Title: Director of Conservation Science

Joined Durrell in: 1992

“We are picking out the Mona Lisas of the natural world, the really outstanding masterpieces of nature”, explains John Fa, Director of Conservation Science at the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust. “The message that we would like you to take away”, he continues, “is that preserving rarity is as important as having masterpieces like the Mona Lisa in museums”.

TopSpots, Durrell's latest scientific accomplishment identifies the 200 most important “natural museums” in most urgent need of attention and is a significant step in this direction. “By creating a prioritisation system for the organisation, allowing us to pick out the key endemicity centres in the world, places that represent unique habitats in the world containing rare species, we are able to become far more focused and better at putting the little resources we have to the best use”, explains John Fa.

TopSpots is a great scientific achievement for Durrell and a sign of the transformation Durrell, as an organisation, has gone through in recent years, today ranking it as a respected scientific organisation as well as a conservation centre. “It is important to realise how Durrell has changed, but also how the science of conservation has changed. We are very active in pushing the frontiers of science in terms of doing the conservation work that we want to do, and *TopSpots* has given us a focus, a clear strategy.”

The significance of biodiversity is still not fully appreciated by the public, argues Fa. “The importance of biodiversity, the conservation of species throughout the world”, he explains, “is fundamental to our livelihoods and survival. As people, we all depend on the use of natural products but at the same time we wouldn't like to see a world that is stripped bare and uniform. Our work is to preserve the rare, because if we don't take care of the world now, what is common today will be rare tomorrow. Through our work we want to maintain a world with more butterflies, more birds, whilst at the same time preserving the things that are fundamental to our lives and to the livelihoods of many people. All our projects are dealing

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with issues that have to do with livelihoods. We are interested in people as much as we are in biodiversity”, he explains.

John Fa is a scientist at heart, but the wider implications of Durrell’s work are very much at the forefront of his work and ethos. “Without conservation and the preservation of the ecosystem services and species webs, we risk the collapse of the world as we know it”, he says. “Essentially we risk waking up in 100 years in a world of grey, unimaginative communities of animals and plants, essentially run by one or two prolific species, a world overrun by black rats and cockroaches, with grey skies and nothing more”.

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Interview:

Carrying a Legacy

Name: Lee Durrell

Title: Honorary Director

At Durrell since: 1979 when she married Gerald Durrell

“Before I came here”, explains Lee Durrell, Honorary Director of Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, “I somehow had the mistaken notion that the whole island of Jersey was devoted to Gerald Durrell’s zoo. So it was a bit of a surprise when I landed at the airport and there were farms and villages and things”, she laughs.

Since she arrived in Jersey from America in 1979, Lee has made Jersey her home. “Don’t forget, by now I have spent more of my life in Jersey than I have in America, so this is definitely my base”, she says.

Upon Gerald Durrell’s death in 1995, Lee assumed the mantle of Honorary Director, playing a strong ambassadorial role for the Trust. “Still having the Durrell name is a great responsibility”, she says, “I must be careful to use it wisely in my efforts to get people behind us and behind our mission, in terms of awareness, of course, but also in terms of financial support.

“One of my roles is to ensure the institution retains an institutional memory, in other words, maintains continuity in terms of the values that Gerry based it on in the first place. It is easy when a founder dies for people to come in with sweeping changes. I try to make sure that we don’t forget the significance of what we have done in the past and to see that our values are applied to our activities in the future”.

Durrell as an organisation has changed drastically in the 30 years Lee has been involved. “We were like a very small family in the late 70s”, she explains, “Of course many of the original people have retired now, which is sad in one way, but at the same time there is now room for all sorts of new people and perhaps new ways of thinking, so it’s a very exciting time. We certainly are a lot better now at telling the world our story. Previously, we just got on with our work, hiding our light under a bushel. Our mission is now clearly focused and articulated, as well as grounded in a very strong track record”.

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As an organisation Durrell has made giant leaps in the last few years, launching a powerful scientific tool, *TopSpots*, and developing an ambitious vision for the future, a multi-million pound expansion plan for the Trust's Jersey headquarters, linked to its work in *TopSpots*. Did Gerald ever imagine Durrell becoming as big and influential as it has? "That's a good question actually. I know he had a grand vision from the beginning, so he would have hoped the Trust would become something like this. He was particularly proud of the International Training Centre for instance. But Gerry always said he wanted us to be small but perfect, in other words not to turn into a mega-institution, but rather to concentrate on doing everything we do perfectly", says Lee.

"Now more than ever, particularly with *TopSpots* in mind, we have to ask ourselves the question of how big we want to be", she explains, "We can't do everything and do it well, so it is key that we remain focused and use our resources as efficiently as possible. This is a good reason, for example, to partner with other like-minded organisations, and I certainly see that happening in the future".

One organisation she particularly admires is the Disney Wildlife Conservation Foundation, the conservation arm of Disney's Animal Kingdom. "They have some of the best people from around the world", she explains, "and one of our previous staff is now Head of Birds over there. They are really good, and I like the idea of working with them. I also have great admiration for Fauna and Flora International, or FFI, which is the oldest conservation organisation in the world. And then of course many zoos are now excellent, such as Chester Zoo and some of the ones in America".

As Honorary Director of Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust, Lee will be very busy during the 50th anniversary year, a time when a clear formulation of key messages will be crucial. What does she think Gerald's main message would have been in his anniversary speech? "I like to think that his and my messages would be the same! The key message would be to communicate the importance of biodiversity and our focus on species conservation. Conservation is wide ranging, from saving species to stopping pollution to protecting forests. But I think our approach, which is to begin with the species from which the rest will follow, is very effective", she says.

"I feel passionately that the world now needs a hands-on approach, be that through breeding animals in a controlled situation or increasing their populations in the wild by managing their resources. This is what is going to have to happen if we are to save the planet's biodiversity. It's impossible to just leave a piece of wilderness alone now because it isn't alone. There are

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people and the impacts of people everywhere. So that is the message, and it is very much linked to looking at ourselves as a species, at our own behaviour and its ecological consequences. Every species has an impact, and ours certainly isn't something to be proud of".

In her spare time Lee is also a keen pilot and has used her qualifications actively to benefit the Trust in recent years. She started flying in 1999 and got her pilot's licence in September of that year, three months before her 50th birthday. "I always dreamed of learning to fly", she explains, "but Gerry was never keen because he thought it was so dangerous. When he was gone, I was free to do what I wanted, so I started taking lessons. I was well and truly bitten by the aviation bug", she laughs. Her hobby coincided with a time when flight links to Jersey were limited and airlines were putting more and more restrictions on carrying live animals. "I had the opportunity to take our animals directly from their home in Jersey to their new homes, so that has worked out really well", she says.

Durrell has set itself an ambitious future. "In 20 years time I see us as a world leader in species conservation, demonstrating to everyone that our approach is a valid and valuable way to save biodiversity", explains Lee. "Of course there will be challenges along the way; climate change, money and all the threats currently facing the world's species and habitats are just a few. We'll just keep working as hard and as smart as we can", she says.

"Gerry said once: 'People always ask me, "Mr Durrell, is there any hope?" Sometimes I ponder the question, but really I can't imagine doing anything else than work for what I believe in. Otherwise I'd just go somewhere warm and sit under a palm tree. But for me this is not an option.' That is very much the attitude we still live by today", Lee concludes.