

Pioneering zoo puts conservation first

[Clip from BBC FOUR Timeshift: When Britain Went Wild]

[Mark Carwadine]

As a young man, Gerard Durrell had been an animal collector for zoos. He'd spend months travelling the world and catching animals to bring home but as time went on he became increasingly disillusioned.

[Lee Durrell]

There was the attitude 'well there are plenty more where they came from' and Gerry had just slaved and worked and tried to keep these creatures alive and learned how to do it for so many months and then just to hand them over – well that drove him absolutely mad. And he decided – I don't know when was the exact moment – but he decided 'I'm not going to do this anymore for anybody else, I am going to develop and establish a place of my own as a sanctuary where I can actually help save these creatures as species - save species from extinction.'

[Gerard Durrell]

Long ago, I decided that when I finally got a zoo of my own it would have to be able to do certain things. It would act as a sanctuary for animals which were in danger in the wild and it would give people the chance of learning more about about animals both to increase their own knowledge and to enable the animals to be looked after with much more skill.

[Mark Carwadine]

Durrell was one of the first to promote the idea of 'captive breeding' – breeding endangered species in zoos and later releasing them back into the wild.