



European zoos honour pioneers of scientific population management

Amsterdam 25 September 2019: On 21 September 2019, the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) wrapped up its Annual Conference with an awards ceremony honouring the contribution of three key figures in its development. Over the past decades, Robert Lacy, Laurie Bingham Lackey and Bengt Holst have all contributed to the development of modern zoo techniques aimed at safeguarding species for future generations, and the EAZA Lifetime Achievement Awards recognize the scale of their accomplishments.

Dr. Bob Lacy, a conservationist and evolutionary biologist from the Chicago Zoological Society was instrumental in the design of PMx, a software package enabling demographic and genetic analysis that assists with population management decisions related to wildlife. PMx continues to be central to the planning of species programmes in EAZA and other zoo associations worldwide. A former Chair of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Conservation Planning Specialist Group (IUCN SSC CPSG), Bob is the author of over 200 peer-reviewed papers on topics ranging from genetics, population biology, evolutionary theory, ecology, behaviour, physiology, taxonomy, and conservation, and has worked tirelessly to ensure a strong scientific base for the operation of zoos and aquariums during his long and distinguished career.

"Bob not only designed and implemented many of the software tools we use daily, he also remains very active in the creation of a conservation legacy for future generations via the Species Conservation Toolkit Initiative (SCTI). This partnership enables the continued development of tools essential to conservation actions, not only by zoos and aquariums but also the wider conservation community" says Myfanwy Griffith, Executive Director of EAZA.

Laurie Bingaman Lackey's work on continued development of the existing software platform for the modernisation of pedigree studbooks for zoo animals has also played a huge role in the shaping of progressive zoos and aquariums as scientifically-based institutions for the protection of species. Laurie continued to develop the SPARKS platform, teaching population management coordinators to use it to track the history of those populations, and has overseen its implementation and use over more than two decades. Also a prolific author of scientific papers on subjects including nutrition, population management, comparative evolution, and especially demographic and genetic management, Laurie has been a central figure at EAZA and the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA) for many years.

"Laurie is recognized by zoo and aquarium professionals all over the world for her extraordinarily calm and patient explanations to EEP coordinators how to use population management software and the underlying genetic and demographic science which guides our population management strategies" says Danny de Man, EAZA's Director of Conservation and Population Management.

"There is not a single user of SPARKS in EAZA that has not at some point in their career as studbook keeper relied on Laurie's support, which she provided regardless of the time of day with dedication and efficiency."

Bengt Holst is the Scientific Director of Copenhagen Zoo in Denmark and has led EAZA's EEP Committee for 16 years as part of a zoo conservation career stretching back three decades. The EEP Committee is the principal European structure for animal population management and is responsible for ensuring a cohesive strategy for EAZA's *ex situ* conservation efforts. Bengt has been a driving

force in the reform of EAZA Ex Situ Programmes (EEP), providing a framework that aims to integrate these programmes into the wider conservation effort to save species.

“Bengt has been a key figure in the design and implementation of an ex situ conservation model based on scientific principles and a need for cooperation with field conservationists. His enormous contribution to the protection of species cannot be overestimated, and we thank him for everything he has done,” says Dr. Thomas Kauffels, Chair of EAZA and Director of Opel-Zoo in Germany.

In bestowing these Lifetime Achievement Awards, EAZA recognizes the extraordinary contributions of all three of these legendary figures in the European and indeed global zoo and aquarium community. All three, despite recent or upcoming retirement, will undoubtedly continue to play a role in the further development of scientifically based zoo and aquarium conservation, building on their already impressive legacies. EAZA wishes them all well for the future and thanks them for all of their extraordinary work in their fields.

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About EAZA:

About the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria: The membership organization of Europe’s most progressive zoological institutions, the [European Association of Zoos and Aquaria](#) comprises more than 400 zoos, aquariums and other institutions across 48 countries, collaborating for the advancement of conservation, research and education. EAZA is a significant stakeholder in the fight to protect the future of the natural world, both in Europe and across the world.