

Conservation Genetics Pioneer Jonathan D. Ballou Receives Devra Kleiman Scientific Advancement Award

The Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute is proud to announce that Jonathan D. Ballou, research scientist emeritus, has received the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA)'s prestigious Devra Kleiman Scientific Advancement Award for outstanding scientific research contributions to the field of animal management, education, and conservation within the zoo and aquarium community. For more than three decades, Ballou's pioneering work in conservation genetics has played an



instrumental role in saving species, including Golden lion tamarins, Black-footed ferrets, California condors, Sumatran tigers, Florida panthers, Bali mynahs, and Giant pandas. His theoretical basis for the mean kinship-based method for the genetic management is the standard used worldwide for breeding recommendations.

"It is no exaggeration to say that the global zoo world's contributions to *ex situ* conservation, as well as our efforts to build sustainable zoo populations, are dependent on Jon's work," says Dr. Onnie Byers, chair of the IUCN SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group.

Ballou worked closely for many years with the award's namesake, Devra Kleiman, on Golden lion tamarin conservation, where he was the first to create an electronic studbook for this species. Ballou went on to co-develop the analytical software used by zoos worldwide, and by many other population managers, for the genetic and demographic management of *ex situ* populations of both threatened and non-threatened species. Ballou began his career as a Friends of the National Zoo volunteer then research zoologist at the Smithsonian's National Zoo in 1983, holding several senior level positions until his retirement in 2015. He is the co-author of "Introduction to Conservation Genetics," the first, and very influential, textbook in conservation genetics. He continues to serve as research scientist emeritus at the Smithsonian's National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute and remains active in the Species Conservation Toolkit Initiative.

The Devra Kleiman Scientific Advancement Award, named for its first recipient Devra Kleiman, honors an individual's long-term commitment to using science-based research and mentoring others to advance the zoo and aquarium profession. Only one recipient can be honored each year, and since the award criteria are lofty, it is anticipated that the award will not be given every year. The announcement was made at the annual AZA conference currently underway in San Diego, California.

Source: <https://nationalzoo.si.edu/news/conservation-genetics-pioneer-jonathan-d-ballou-receives-devra-kleiman-scientific-advancement>