

CBSG's U. S. Seal Award presented to Dr. Gordon McGregor Reid, Director (Retd.) Chester Zoo

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Ulysses S. Seal Award for Innovation in Conservation

The Ulysses S. Seal Award for Innovation in Conservation is given each year by the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, but it is regarded very highly not only by the CBSG but also by the entire zoo and aquarium community, and by the IUCN Species Survival Commission. Dr. Ulysses S. Seal was the first Chairman of the CBSG, serving from 1979 to 2003. His great passion and talent was his creative thinking about how new science could be most effectively applied to solving the problems of wildlife conservation. His contributions were amplified many times over by his further ability to recognize, encourage, and utilize others who also were making such innovative contributions.

Ulrie Seal contributed to conservation in many ways, and it is interesting and inspiring to see the diverse ways that the small cohort of past award recipients helped to achieve conservation. Previous recipients include researchers who have applied their considerable scientific expertise to the needs of conservation – such notable scientists as Georgina Mace and Jon Ballou. Georgina Mace also contributed immeasurably to the work of the IUCN. Nate Flesness has made his contributions through being an organizational leader who brought the zoo community together, around data, to serve conservation. Frances Westley stepped out of her academic environment to teach us struggling conservationists as well as her students. And the small cohort of prior recipients include some who have been effective champions of the often neglected species of small size but with huge impacts on ecosystems – advocates such as Paul Pearce-Kelly and Sally Walker. Last year's recipient, Lena Linden, was the first zoo director to receive the US Seal Award, recognizing her success at creating and transforming a zoo into a remarkable conservation organization. Thus, the recipients of the US Seal award have clearly been a remarkable group of scientists, teachers, tool developers, organizational and community leaders, zoo pioneers, and inspiring and tireless advocates for species. And, to be fair to these past awardees, I should note moreover that most of them fit comfortably into several of these categories.

Yet, this year's recipient of the US Seal Award for Innovation in Conservation – Gordon McGregor Reid – fits *all* of these categories! He is a notable scientist, with numerous scientific publications, and having served even as the President of the Linnaean Society – the place where Darwin and Wallace first presented their work on the origin of species. He has been a leader in the IUCN, leading the Fresh Water Fishes SG – a group that has been so actively that they just added assessments of more than 5000 species to the Red List. He has been a leader in the zoo world, developing Chester Zoo as a model for how a zoo can be successful as a zoo and also make major contributions to conservation projects around the world, and then also serving as WAZA President, and being a wonderful contributor to CBSG advisory committees, and as one of the original co-leaders of the Amphibian Ark.

Gordon has been a champion of species that are often neglected by the conservation world – such as the many freshwater fishes, which – sadly – are in as much trouble globally as are the amphibians. He has also been the champion of *people* who sometimes feel neglected. When an important conservation project urgently needs more support – whether financial support, wise guidance, or just

encouragement – Gordon is the one on whom we have come to rely.

Although Gordon's personal accomplishments are numerous (even if he keeps them quiet), perhaps his biggest impact has been very similar to the most notable aspect of Ulrie Seal's leadership – which is that he recognizes, encourages, mentors, and supports people who are able and eager to make a difference for species conservation.

To quote from one of Gordon's nominators:

"To give just an example, Gordon Reid's adoption of many struggling zoo publications over the years have kept them alive and thriving, and his support of new, needed publications have made technical information available to thousands of zoo personnel to improve their expertise and professional relationships.

Chester Zoo's grants programme also has saved many a struggling conservation project, and Gordon's immediate (and quite often un-asked, even) response to myriad "good causes" and emergencies in animal welfare and conservation are well known. Gordon Reid's generosity goes far beyond offering funds from his institution. Gordon gives immense support to new and small and often neglected causes, putting his own reputation and standing on the line to support individuals and entities in which only he has spotted the value and potential."

Perhaps Gordon's insight and devotion to helping struggling conservationists comes from his own background. One of his colleagues wrote to me to relate that when Gordon graduated with his PhD he was unable to secure an appropriate job in the UK at the time. As a consequence he went to Nigeria where he was a lecturer at a remote bush university. He also filled in between by driving delivery trucks in London. As Gordon's colleague noted: that is what you might call some hardball experience to prepare anybody for success in the biosciences and the conservation!

When I started to prepare this presentation, I realized that I had a wee bit of a problem. Gordon has done so much for conservation and zoos and fishes, and he has received so many prestigious honors for his work, that if I even began to catalog them for you I would leave no time for Gordon to respond. I will just note a few special honors that you may not have known about. Along with several honorary PhD degrees, Gordon is also an honorary citizen of Bolivia, he twice was the winner of the *Waterlife Cup* for excellence in aquarium keeping, he has several species of fish named after him, and a number of species of fish, amphibians, and conservationists probably owe their continued existence to him.

As Gordon's nomination noted – it is perhaps especially appropriate that he receives this award in the International Year of Biodiversity. His contributions to understanding and protecting biodiversity have been felt in all continents, across diverse and extremely speciose taxa, and he has guided the zoo community, governments, NGOs, field research teams, and academia. Gordon, it gives me much more than just a wee bit of pleasure to present to you the 2010 Ulysses S Seal Award for Innovation in Conservation.



Bob giving citation for US Seal Award to Gordon. Photos by ZOO.

CBSG & WAZA members witness presentation of US Seal Award to Gordon Reid



Gordon displaying his Award for Innovation in Conservation



Gordon and wife, Sally Reid with Award Medallion



Gordon speaking to CBSG WAZA gathering after presentation of Award