

Former CBSG Chair Awarded with U.S. Seal Award for Innovation at CBSG Annual meeting hosted by Melbourne Zoo

Dr. Robert O. Lacy has been an outstanding friend, mentor, conservation architect, and innovator to this writer and hundreds of other conservationists for nearly three or more decades. Bob worked perfectly with Dr. Tom Foose and Dr. U. S. Seal to develop the VORTEX computer program which enabled ground-breaking insight into population dynamics and also how to save species. He has been instrumental in forwarding multiple tools into use by hundreds of academics and field biologists.

His skills and interests cover broad and pertinent areas of conservation such as inbreeding and outbreeding depression, Genetic management of captive populations, modeling dynamics of related disciplines affecting wildlife – e.g., population biology, epidemiology, wildlife harvest, habitat fragmentation, and changes in human populations. Bob has been a conservation biologist almost since graduation first as Chairman of the Department of Conservation Biology, Chicago Zoological Society in 1992 where he was promoted to Conservation Biologist cum Population Geneticist from 1985 to the present. During the period of 2003 – 2011 Bob also served as Chairman, IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group. While in this position he served several years as Chair of the Conservation Planning committee of



Ashok Khosla, President, IUCN and Simon Stuart, Chair SSC noting Robert Lacy's contribution to conservation on receiving the George Rabb Award for Conservation Innovation at the World Conservation Congress.

SSC, IUCN ultimately bringing out a seminal document on the subject which is now being initiated from CBSG. Also, Bob has been and is a member of all the relevant professional societies.

Bob has taught conservation biology and its various offshoots at several colleges and universities as well as having delivered numerous invited lectures, participation at a copious number of professional meetings, and

a vast range of professional services. His contribution to conservation biology and all of its offshoots might compete that of Dr. Ulysses S. Seal, his mentor, who would be very proud and happy to have an equal in Bob Lacy!

Bob was selfless in his willingness to help people understand conservation biology and population management and to use the various tools, many of which were developed by him. He was also very patient, and this writer - who benefitted much by Bob's visits to run training programmes, feels that it is in the area of Bob's patience, tolerance, endurance and forgiveness that his mettle was thoroughly tested and all who really know him can speak with authority of what a noble person he is.

CBSG, India and later CBSG South Asia took great advantage of Bob's good qualities, calling him over to India and Pakistan to deliver lectures on the conservation sciences, modeling in PHVAs, train young field biologists and foresters in basics of population biology and zoo people in conservation breeding. Bob was a very good sport in all the events, enduring without complaint the spine shattering drives over bumpy and often narrow winding roads, questionable accommodation, unfamiliar and frequently "extremely



Simon Stuart requested current CBSG Chair and friend of Robert Lacy to receive the certificate on his behalf at the SSC IUCN meeting of SG Chairs.

well-seasoned" foods, dodgy digestion, questionable toilet facilities, uncertain water, hot and humid weather, endless days and many more inconveniences that he was too polite to mention....the man never complained. Bob was our guest in Baroda, Gujarat doing the modelling in 1993 for the Asiatic Lion PHVA, again, later in 1993 in Jaldapara, West Bengal for the Great Indian Rhinoceros PHVA; in Coimbatore 1996 along with Jon Ballou teaching foresters and wildlife biologists Small Population Biology and Tools of Recovery (both *in situ* and *ex situ*), in Lahore, Pakistan as primary resource person for the technical portion of the SAZARC conference in 2004, etc.

Bob's resilience even extended to eating fire, which he actually volunteered to do at the international meeting conducted by the Central Zoo Authority in 2008. Fire-eating was part of the entertainment and Bob was the first to volunteer.

Bob deserved the U.S. Seal Award long before now but he could not be nominated because he was himself Chair of the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group. He resigned as Chair after a very good run last year to devote more time to his various research projects. This is his first year of eligibility and all of CBSG was proud to honor him at this sacrosanct award within CBSG. **Sally Walker**

The USS Award Ceremony for Robert O. Lacy

It is with great pleasure that we celebrate tonight, with so many members of the CBSG family and with our friends from WAZA, the legacy of CBSG's founder, Ulysses Seal. I'd like to begin by thanking our selection committee, Jo Gipps, Lena Linden and Mark Craig, for their work in reviewing nominations and unanimously choosing this year's award recipient.

Ulie Seal's 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 put to work others who were making, or had the potential to make, such innovative contributions. CBSG honors Ulie's legacy through the awarding of the Ulysses S. Seal Award for Innovation in Conservation to an individual who embodies similar qualities. Each year, since this award was established in 2003, until tonight,



A very young Bob Lacy doing the modelling of Great Indian Rhinoceros for a PHVA conducted combined with an Asian Rhino Specialist Group conducted in Jaldapara, West Bengal, India in 1993 with Ulie Seal to his left and a participant to his right. (Photo courtesy Z.O.O.).



Older and (one would think) wiser, in 1996, Bob continues to assist CBSG India with their challenging workshops, this one in Coimbatore for Lion Tailed Macaque. Jon Ballou joined and is to the left. (Photo courtesy Z.O.O.).



In 2004, Bob was primary Resource Person at the CBSG, South Asia meeting & South Asian Zoo Association Annual Conference SAZARC. Bob delivered so many lectures on the most pertinent topics for zoo conservationists, from I to Z, ISIS to Zoo Population Management.including ISIS to (Photo courtesy Z.O.O.).

it has been presented by Bob Lacy. Bob has said many times that presenting this award was one of his favorite things about being Chair of CBSG. So it's especially gratifying that Bob will be able to participate in this award

ceremony as well. But this time not as presenter, but as the 2012 recipient of the Ulie Seal Award for Innovation in Conservation. It is difficult to imagine a more worthy recipient of this award. Few individuals show Bob's intellectual drive and his ability to develop new and better scientific tools to promote conservation, but fewer still are the people who share his strength of conviction in terms of free and open access to the products of his work. Bob's sole focus is the conservation of the species with which we share this planet. His sole goal is to see his work used and expanded upon for the benefit those species.

Bob's academic and professional accomplishments are impressive. He



CZA's entertainment included opportunities that non-Asians would never get to do in their lifetime. Hence, Bob Lacy simply could not wait to eat fire, inspiring a very few others to try. Being an intellectual whiz sometimes encourages bizarre hobbies. Photo by ZOO.



Dr. Onnie Byers, Chair, CBSG presents the Award to Dr. Robert O. Lacy.

has authored or coauthored over 150 publications (11 with Ulie). In his long and highly productive career with the Chicago Zoological Society, Bob has explored many aspects of population biology and developed scientific principles, data analysis techniques and modelling tools, all with profound implications for the management of populations at risk of extinction.



Back in Lahore, Bob looks dubious in every food photo. Maybe we told him a tad too much about what is available to eat on Lahore's exotic menus, particularly the charming and jolly street market restaurants which pack up and go when the last goat goodie has been consumed. He was a good sport about (almost) everything! Photos by ZOO.



Bob Lacy and his wife Ann Baker enjoying the much deserved moment.



IUCN SSC



SOUTH ASIA

Much of his success comes from the fact that, when faced with a complex conservation challenge, one that others might call unsolvable, Bob dedicates himself to solving it. In 1988, Bob was asked by Ulie to participate in a workshop on Puerto Rican Toads. The workshop had the dual purposes of assessing and guiding management of both the captive and the wild populations (a OPA!). Bob was asked to participate as an expert in the genetic management of captive populations and, in this role, he provided valuable advice. But his ground breaking contribution came when, during the meeting, Bob recognized that some aspects of the population simulation model they intended to use were not going to meet the needs of this situation, and the program was so slow that it couldn't be used in a workshop setting. So Bob offered to rewrite the program into a different computer language, enhance its capabilities, and extend the model in several ways to suit the toad data. And this is just what he did - overnight. By the next morning Bob had a working program that assisted in the identification of management actions to save the Puerto Rican toad.

That program, now known as VORTEX, is the most widely used Population Viability Analysis (PVA) software in the world and has served as the backbone of CBSG's PHVA workshops for 20 years. Florida panthers, black-footed ferrets, golden lion tamarins, Iberian lynx, mountain gorillas, Sumatran tigers, Javan rhinos, eastern barred bandicoots, Tasmanian devils - and many more endangered species have benefited from the Vortex program born at that workshop in Puerto Rico. Without Vortex, conservation planning efforts are less likely to be inspired and less likely to succeed. But Vortex was just the beginning. For many years Bob has pushed to expand population models to incorporate additional factors and increasing complexity.

The result is the development of MetaModel Manager, a revolutionary approach to species risk assessment that transfers data, between PVA models, landscape modeling tools, emerging disease models, and climate change models, for an unprecedented approach to biologically complex processes. In addition to Vortex and metamodels, Bob (in collaboration with previous award recipient, Jon Ballou)

developed software for pedigree analysis primarily of captive populations. In line with his vision, Bob works with colleagues to create tools for integrating the management of populations for conservation along the entire continuum of population management options.

Not only has he contributed greatly to the creation of our base of conservation knowledge and tools for exploring it but Bob is selfless in his commitment to helping people understand and use that knowledge and those tools. Bob has been a patient and enthusiastic mentor to hundreds of conservationists from all over the world throughout his career. Including many of us in this room.

As you know, Bob served as Chair of CBSG from Ulie's death until just last year. During this time, Bob redoubled CBSG's commitment to the zoo and aquarium community and continues to urge its strong commitment to conservation. And now, as CBSG's science advisor and conservation scientist for CZS, Bob is uniquely positioned to help bridge the narrowing gaps in knowledge, tools and collaboration in order to more effectively meet the challenges of conserving the world's biodiversity. Bob's contributions to conservation have been significant and far reaching, yet he remains modest and soft spoken. He is a man of integrity with an intellect as generous as it is vast. His steadfast belief in openness, free access, and equality, and his tireless work on behalf of our planet's threatened species make him an extraordinary role model. Bob's heartfelt reward is the conservation of species, in the wild, living and functioning in their ecosystems without, risk of extinction. Until that has been achieved for all species, Bob will never feel that his work is done. And because of his truly innovative, game changing contributions, and his role as a mentor to so many, Bob's impact on effective conservation will continue long into the future.

Not only was the choice of Bob as recipient to this year's award unanimous, so is the belief that Ulie would be enormously proud to have Bob receive this award to honor their shared life passion and drive for innovation - in thinking, in tools, and in partnerships - for conservation.

Onnie Byers, CBSG

The Baaaaaad Bob

By Sally Walker

Bob Lacy seems practically flawless in his manner and actions, in fact, among men of all seasons at least in conservation circles, he is the perfect gentleman scholar. Finding fault with Bob is harder than looking for a needle in a haystack, but if your behavior is sufficiently unbearable, you can bring him down to human level. I, without trying, seem to have done so, as he said terribly rude things about me in front of the entire CBSG icebreaker one year. Despite my embarrassment, it is my duty to introduce you to the "Baaaaaad Bob". He said ...

"I have an admission to make: after the first workshop in which I worked closely with Sally Walker, I wondered if I would ever want to work with that woman again. She just kept demanding things that were unreasonable, such as endless hours of presentations and teaching while I struggled with jet lag, lack of time to prepare adequately, and the ill health that generally hits westerners who find themselves eating at little stalls on the streets of cities in India. And it didn't seem to bother her that we were trying to teach a workshop on computer tools when power often went off for an hour or so.

I still sometimes find Sally to be hard to work with. She is still demanding but even more demanding of herself than others, ... not that that makes a difference as she has very thick skin.

When the Amphibian crisis was taken up by CBSG she went through the motions and created lots of good buzz, but she was personally highly skeptical about the initiative in India...still.

She just does things that she thinks need to be done without concern about whether anyone else thinks it's feasible, or whether she might look foolish trying, or whether she might offend or get someone into trouble.

Sally uses people - such as when she brought me and Ulie and Jon Ballou from the USA to run workshops and teach training course in places where no one speaks English; Miranda Stevenson and Mike Jordan from UK to groups of elderly people who remember the Queen ... not in a nice way, Mickey Soorae, UAE, begging 1000s of RSG booklets and Cecilia Kierulff from Sao Paulo, Brazil to India to teach workshops using Golden Lion Tamarin as a model for Hoolock Gibbons(!) (whether it works or not, and it did, is entirely beside the point). Sg. Bob Lacy

See what I mean !