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## **Ralph W. Schreiber Conservation Award, 2009**

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## **RALPH W. SCHREIBER CONSERVATION AWARD, 2009**

SCOTT R. DERRICKSON

The AOU's Ralph W. Schreiber Conservation Award was established in 2005 to honor persons who have made extraordinary scientific contributions to the conservation, restoration, or preservation of birds and their habitats. The life's work of Scott Derrickson has been in the science of captive breeding and recovery of endangered

birds, and his contributions and leadership in this arena have been extraordinary. Derrickson, trained under the tutelage of Frank M. McKinney at the University of Minnesota, completed his dissertation in animal behavior and ecology in 1977. His doctoral research concerned the dispersal and sexual behavior of dabbling ducks.



Scott R. Derrickson at the Conservation and Research Center near Front Royal, Virginia, in September 2009. (Photograph by Lisa Ware.)

After publishing several seminal papers from this Ph.D. work, Derrickson accepted a position with the Endangered Species Research Program of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) at Patuxent, Maryland. There he began a long and productive career working with endangered species. His early research in avian conservation developed methods of captive breeding and management for the Whooping Crane. This groundbreaking work was critical to the development of Patuxent's highly successful captive-breeding program.

Among the flagship programs in avian conservation in the early 1970s, perhaps none was more visible than that of the Whooping Crane. Derrickson conducted behavioral research on captive crane flocks and provided leadership on their management. His findings led directly to increases in productivity through multiple clutching for transfer of eggs to wild parents when flocks were being reestablished in Canada and Idaho. His research was also important to the development of successful captive-breeding protocols for Whooping Cranes.

Derrickson remained with the USFWS until 1984, when he moved to the Smithsonian's National Zoological Park to curate the bird collection. Since then, he has been involved in addressing many important avian captive-breeding and restoration problems at the National Zoo's Conservation and Research Center. He used his new curatorial position and zoo association to venture far beyond the typical duties of a bird curator, both in terms of conducting and directing cutting-edge research and in developing programs and policies to ensure the survival of dozens of critically endangered species. He has conducted research or advised on the captive breeding and recovery of Guam Rails, Puerto Rican Parrots, Hawaiian Crows, Micronesian Kingfishers, Mariana Crows, and Micronesian White-eyes. The last remaining Guam Rails and

Micronesian Kingfishers were rescued from the wild and established at the Conservation and Research Center under his supervision. Since then, many of these captive birds have been successfully reintroduced into the wild. Derrickson has also made incredibly important contributions to the conservation of Hawaiian and Mariana crows. He has also been active in the management of captive populations of cranes, pheasants, parrots, and Hawaiian forest birds. Most recently, he was a key participant in the AOU's "blue ribbon panel" review of the California Condor recovery program.

Derrickson's work has had a wide effect on avian conservation through the development of a captive-breeding and reintroduction paradigm that has been widely cited (e.g., *Conservation Biology* 10:338–348). Captive breeding was touted as a panacea for many declining populations in the 1990s. Possessing over two decades of experience with successful and unsuccessful programs, Derrickson had important perspectives on the roles of disease and domestication in breeding birds for reintroduction. These perspectives have become influential cornerstones for how to conduct captive breeding for conservation.

As Derrickson's career progressed, he assumed a wider administrative role. In addition to his duties as curator of birds at the National Zoo, he serves as deputy associate director of the Smithsonian's Conservation and Research Center. Despite these constraints on his time, Derrickson has sponsored or cosponsored numerous outstanding postdoctoral fellows at the zoo, many of whom, including Susan Haig, Lisa Sorenson, Michael Sorenson, Cathy Blohowiak, John Dumbacher, and Ginger Bolen, have gone on to successful careers in ornithology.

Derrickson's work has received wide recognition from agencies, conservation organizations, and the zoo community. He has

received awards from the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (1998), the USFWS (1997), and the Smithsonian Institution for his work. Many feel that modern avian conservation began with the application of science to management and recovery of endangered species, and Derrickson's efforts were at the forefront of this movement. In recognition of his extraordinary scientific contributions to the conservation of avian species, the AOU is honored to present the fifth annual Ralph W. Schreiber Conservation Award to Scott Derrickson.

*Award criteria.*—The Ralph W. Schreiber Conservation Award recognizes extraordinary scientific contributions to the

conservation, restoration, or preservation of birds and/or their habitats by an individual or small team (usually fewer than 10 people). Contributions from throughout the world and over any time course are eligible. Appropriate activities include (1) applied research, restoration, and educational actions that conserve birds or preserve significant habitats; (2) scientific examination of the principles of avian conservation and application of new insights into species restoration; and (3) scientific evaluation, guidance, creation, and oversight of avian recovery programs or habitat-reserve restoration programs. The award consists of a framed certificate and an honorarium.