

## 2020 Kai Curry-Lindahl Award for Excellence in Conservation

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## 2020 Kai Curry-Lindahl Award for Excellence in Conservation



Jim Fraser (R) & Dan Catlin (L)

The Executive Council of The Waterbird Society is pleased to recognize **Jim Fraser** with the **Kai Curry-Lindahl Award**. This award calls attention to either a lifetime of singular efforts on behalf of the conservation or management of breeding waterbirds and their habitats, or to one outstanding example of such activity that has served as a model for future work. This award is in honor of a pioneer in the conservation of vast areas of critical importance to freshwater colonial birds, not only in his native Europe but in Africa and Asia as well.

Over the last two decades, Jim and his extensive team of graduate students and post-doctoral fellows have studied the demography and conservation of Piping Plovers (*Charadrius melodus*) and other beach-nesting birds. Their contributions have been wide-ranging and form the basis for nearly all our understanding of the threats and their consequences to Piping Plover populations both in the Great Plains region of the United States, and on the east coast.

Jim has also provided interesting and creative ideas to the conservation of other at-risk species, including the Red Knot (*Calidris rufa*). He proposed that factors operating on the arctic-breeding grounds (patterns of lemming cycles) could well explain some of the declines in this endangered species. To put this in context, the prevailing view is that the decline of this charismatic shorebird is intrinsically tied to the unsustainable harvesting of populations of horseshoe crabs (*Limulus polyphemus*). It took an act of bravery to suggest a possible alternative cause to the decline, especially in an issue where politics continue to play a large role.

Jim and his colleagues have also been involved with other contentious conservation issues, like a major bridge development that threatened a large colony of Royal Terns (*Thalasseus maximus*). Through his advocacy and sound science, an agreement was reached that resulted in a win-win situation, with new habitat created (and very quickly colonized) and the new bridge built.

Jim has an impressive legacy in waterbird biology. His funding successes have allowed him to address many waterbird conservation issues in creative ways, at the same time, training a new generation of technicians, and conservation biologists.

Jim is a Professor in the Department of Fisheries and Wildlife Sciences at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University.

Jim earned two Bachelor of Science degrees; State University of New York Maritime College and the University of Idaho. He earned M.Sc. and Ph.D. degrees at the University of Minnesota in Fisheries, Wildlife, and Conservation Biology.

Jim will give the Kai Curry-Lindahl Award Lecture at our 46th Annual Meeting, to be held in Texas in November 2022.