

The AAZK Excellence in Research Award

The American Association of Zoo Keepers (AAZK) is the administering organization of the AAZK Excellence in Research Award presented by the AAZK Awards Committee. The purpose of this award is to recognize keeper driven and organized research projects that further the knowledge of the zoological community. This award is meant to recognize those individuals who identified a need, facilitated the completion of a research project and as a direct result of the project there was an impact on animal welfare/animal wellbeing either in situ or ex situ. It is hoped that recognition of outstanding efforts by keepers to improve animal care and wellbeing through research will provide incentive to keepers to continue to be leaders in this important endeavor.

The AAZK Excellence in Research Award was established in 2024 by the AAZK Awards Committee. The award is presented at the annual AAZK National Conference.

Qualifications

- An individual member of AAZK at any membership level from a zoo/aquarium/related facility, a zoological institution or organization, or a chartered AAZK chapter are eligible to be nominated for this award.
- Nominee(s) must have developed and/or facilitated a research project at their facility that had a direct impact on animal welfare/animal wellbeing either in situ or ex situ.
- The research project must have followed the scientific method, be clear and concise and must have added to the knowledge base of the institution/zoological community.
- Nominees must have excelled in one or more of the following categories:

Keeper Involvement:

- Keeper was involved with conceptual development of the research (identifying the need)
- Keeper was involved with facilitation of completion of research (creating hypotheses, setting up the design, data collection and analysis and report writing)
- Keeper worked in conjunction with their facility to complete the research project in house OR worked in conjunction with an outside organization/university to facilitate this project

Scope/Quality of Project:

- Scientific method was followed for the scope of the project
- Research method chosen was appropriate for the type of project (Behavioral vs. Experimental)
- Methodology was clear and concise and could be replicated by other keepers/facilities
- Research results could benefit other zoological institutions or wild counterparts

Improved Husbandry Practices and/or Conservation Methods

- Research aided in increased information for medical issues (reproductive issues, disease treatment, breeding difficulty)
- Research aided in increased information for behavioral or husbandry issues (stereotypic behaviors, aggression, management of conspecifics)
- The results of the research had a direct and measurable impact on animal welfare/animal wellbeing either in the facility or in the wild

Sharing Research/Dissemination of Knowledge:

- Results of research were disseminated to the zoo community to advance the knowledge of the species or taxa
- Results were presented at either conferences(s) by workshop or poster presentation or published in the AKF or another peer reviewed scientific journal

Nomination Procedure

- The nominee must be nominated by an animal care professional.
- Complete the nomination form which includes the name of keeper(s) who conducted the research, institution's name, address, phone and Director/Curator.
- List and **document** outstanding achievements in one or more of the categories listed under qualifications.
- Completed nomination packet (nomination form and supporting documents) may be submitted beginning January 1st and no later than the deadline: **MAY 1st** of each year.

Verification of the nomination requires a signature from the Director/CEO/Curator of the facility or their representative.

Selection Procedure

- The AAZK Awards Committee will review each nominee. The Board Oversight for Awards Committee shall cast a deciding vote in the instance of a tie.