

Riddell Faculty Seminar Series presents:

The Evolving Role of the Modern Zoo in Conservation

Dr. Kevin C. R. Kerr,
Curator of Birds and Invertebrates, Toronto Zoo

Date: Thursday, February 25th, 2016

Time: 1:30 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Place: Klaus Hochheim Theatre
(5th floor, Wallace Building)

Abstract: Zoos have a centuries-old history, but their role as conservation centers has only evolved in recent decades. While attitudes toward zoos remain variable, the growing consensus is that they have a responsibility toward the preservation of species and the education of the general public. The deep history of zoological institutions, however, can place constraints on their modern day roles, requiring very careful consideration of how zoos should operate to optimize their effectiveness for conservation.

The modern zoo is frequently likened to an ark, but limited resources act as a cap on the number of species that can be saved. Thankfully, we have scientific tools to help remove subjectivity from the seemingly impossible task of deciding which species are most deserving of protection. Furthermore, emerging fields are shedding light on better ways to educate the public and inspire environmental action.

In this talk, Kevin Kerr reviews the evolution of zoos from the Victorian era to modern day and will provide an inside peek into how modern zoos manage healthy captive populations, decide on focal species for conservation, and endeavor to modify visitors' behaviour for the benefit of the natural world.



Biography: Kevin Kerr completed his Ph.D. at the University of Guelph where he explored the efficacy of a DNA-based approach to species identification (namely DNA barcoding) using birds as a model taxonomic group. Subsequently, he moved on to the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Natural History for a post-doctoral fellowship applying DNA barcoding to the identification of birds involved in airline collisions and exploring avian taxonomy. This was followed by a second post-doc at the Royal Ontario Museum where his attention was turned to deeper phylogenetic issues in birds. Ultimately, he migrated out of the museum setting and landed at the Toronto Zoo in 2013 where he now serves as the Curator of Birds and Invertebrates.

12:00 p.m. Free pizza lunch for graduate students with Dr. Kerr,
Dean's Office Boardroom - 440 Wallace Building.