

Major Turtle Conservation Award Announced

Anders G.J. Rhodin and Rick Hudson



Edward O. Moll

The IUCN Turtle Survival Alliance and IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group have announced the establishment of the John Behler Turtle Conservation Award, a new and major annual award to honor leadership and excellence in the field of turtle and tortoise conservation. Inaugurated at the 4th Annual Symposium on Conservation and Biology of Freshwater Turtles and Tortoises held in St. Louis, Missouri 10-13 August 2006, the award honors John Behler, previous Chair of the IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group and Curator of Herpetology at the Bronx Zoo, Wildlife Conservation Society, who passed away in January 2006.

The Behler Award is presented jointly by the IUCN Turtle Survival Alliance and IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group and includes an honorarium of \$3000. Co-sponsoring organizations for the first annual award were Chelonian Research Foundation, Conservation International, Chelonian Research Institute, John L. Behler Chelonian Conservation Center, World Chelonian Trust, and Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust.

The first annual award was presented at a banquet hosted by the St. Louis Zoo for the ca. 240 delegates attending the Symposium. Presenting the award were Anders Rhodin, Chair of the IUCN Tortoise and Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group, Rick Hudson, Co-Chair of the IUCN Turtle Survival Alliance, and Deb Behler of Wildlife Conservation Society.

The honoree receiving the first Behler Award was Edward O. Moll, a life-long turtle researcher and conservationist, whose work and leadership in the field have been inspirational and ground-breaking. Dr. Moll earned a BS and MS from the University of Illinois and a PhD from the University of Utah. Prior to retiring in 1998, he taught for over 30 years in the Department of Zoology at Eastern Illinois University. His research

interests have concerned herpetology and in particular the biology and conservation of tropical river turtles. Over a 30-year period, fieldwork has taken him to Mexico, Panama, South America, Malaysia, and India. His work on critically endangered river terrapins in Malaysia has been of particular importance. Currently he resides with his wife, Judy, in Tucson, Arizona, where he is Adjunct Professor in the School of Natural Resources at the University of Arizona.

He was the first Chair for the IUCN Freshwater Turtle Specialist Group from 1981 to 1985; has served as President of the Society for the Study of Amphibians and Reptiles; a board member of the Illinois Endangered Species Protection Board; and a board member for the Tucson Herpetological Society. His honors include six University-wide Distinguished Teaching Awards, and now the John Behler Turtle Conservation Award. Dr. Moll is the author of about 75 scientific and popular publications. He has co-authored two books, *Field Guide to the Amphibians and Reptiles of Illinois* with R.A. Brandon and C.A. Phillips and *River Turtles – Ecology, Exploitation, and Conservation* with Don Moll.

In addition to honoring the life-time achievements of leading turtle and tortoise conservationists such as Dr. Moll, the Behler Award plans to also honor current conservation efforts by mid-career individuals who are making major contributions to the field. Recognizing and valuing the often tireless and dedicated efforts made by these individuals is important, and the Behler Award hopes to provide some inspiration and reward for those working on the front lines of global turtle conservation efforts.

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<http://www.iucn-tfts.org/ed-moll/>.