2017 Dwight A. Holder Award: Dr. Jeffrey Skibbins

Dr. Jeffrey Skibbins is the recipient of the 2017 Dwight A. Holder Award for outstanding work and sustained achievement by a doctoral graduate from Clemson University Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management and Forestry and Environmental Conservation Departments that fosters understanding, wise use, and conservation of natural and cultural resources.

Dr. Skibbins is an Assistant Professor of Park Management and Conservation at Kansas State University. His research addresses how parks, protected areas, zoos, and aquariums can increase public participation in wildlife conservation. The main focus of his work is to understand how people’s emotional connection to wildlife influences their pro-conservation behaviors. Currently, he oversees projects in Africa, Australia, Europe, South America, Asia, and several U.S. National Parks. He has completed projects addressing conservation of grizzly bears, the African ‘Big 5’, koalas, Tasmanian devils, and Leadbeater’s possums. Recently, Dr. Skibbins has been appointed to the IUCN Commission on Education and Conservation. He has authored more than 40 publications, delivered more than 50 international presentations, and has given several keynote addresses.

Jeffrey received his B.A. in Biology from Illinois Wesleyan University and M.S. in Conservation Biology from Illinois State University. His master’s research was awarded the Fisher Outstanding Thesis award and Best Oral Presentation of the Graduate Research Symposium. Upon completing his M.S., Dr. Skibbins returned to his native Chicago where he began working in natural resource management and interpretation. Over the next fifteen years, Jeffrey served as an interpretive naturalist for the Forest Preserve District of Cook County, education and natural areas manager at The Morton Arboretum, instructor in the Chicago Wilderness Naturalist Certificate program, and
adjunct faculty at North Park University. He also launched his own consulting agency serving regional and federal agencies and NGOs.

In 2012, Jeffrey completed his Ph.D. at Clemson University in the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management department. His research focused on ecotourism and wildlife conservation. While at Clemson, Jeffrey served as President Pro-Tempore of the Graduate Student Senate, and was elected to the Alpha Epsilon Lambda, Phi Kappa Phi, and Omicron Delta Kappa National Honor and Leadership societies. He was also awarded the Clemson University, and PRTM Graduate Student Awards of Excellence. Jeffrey, his wife Lucy, three children, and two large furry dogs live in Manhattan, Kansas.

The Clemson University Institute for Parks (CUIP) provides research, education, training, and outreach that supports and enhances the management of the world’s parks and protected areas. It accomplishes this by providing park and protected area managers with innovative research to support science-based decision-making; and by developing current and future leaders in the park movement by providing interdisciplinary and transformative education and training programs. Currently the CUIP has 35 Clemson University Faculty affiliates (Fellows) from 4 colleges. For more information, see www.Clemson.edu/cuip

The Hartzog Awards & Lecture Series began in 1978 with a financial gift from William C. Everhart and his wife Mary to honor George B. Hartzog, Jr., 7th Director of the National Park Service, South Carolina native, and long-time Clemson University supporter. The annual Hartzog Awards Program presents six awards, each named for outstanding colleagues of George B. Hartzog, Jr., to recognize exemplary leadership in protecting our natural, cultural, and historic resources and in addressing challenges facing parks and protected areas. For more information about the Hartzog Awards and Lecture Program or past winners, visit: www.clemson.edu/cuip/hartzog