

Midwest Primate Interest Group

Newsletter

Issue 1
February 2020

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Midwest Primatologists,

Happy New Year! It is hard to believe that February has arrived. It will be time for our annual MPIG meeting again before we know it.

Things have been busy here behind the scenes at MPIG. Over the past year, we have transitioned into new leadership (as listed at the end of the newsletter). With this range of new perspectives to work from, we have been updating the MPIG platform. Mitch Irwin has created a new website that includes many resources, including our by-laws, policies, and other statements, MPIG history, and meeting information. We have revised our by-laws, with the biggest change being the addition of an Education Officer to run student-centered activities at our annual meeting, and to improve engagement with communities beyond MPIG. Finally, we are trying to improve and streamline logistics around the annual meeting as well as communications outside of the annual meeting. Our overall goal is to preserve MPIG's original mission of providing a community in which scholars of all levels can interact comfortably while simultaneously improving the efficiency with which those interactions happen. Let us know if you have any thoughts or suggestions.

Of course, our annual meeting will continue to be the focal point of the organization. In this vein, I want to thank Leila Porter, Mitch Irwin, and Tim Bransford for hosting us all at Northern Illinois University last fall. The meeting went smoothly and was enjoyed by all. A special thanks also to our Distinguished Primatologist, Dr. Susan Ford. It was an honor to have her with us.

Looking forward, we are excited to have the Lester E. Fisher Center for the Study and Conservation of Apes at the Lincoln Park Zoo hosting MPIG 2020. We will confirm dates later this spring, but please plan to join us in Chicago.

Finally, I want to thank all of you for your continued dedication to MPIG. The conference landscape becomes more overwhelming every year as our options and commitments increase. However, MPIG's continued strength is a testament to the importance of small, local conferences for meaningful networking and career development opportunities. Please know that we deeply appreciate all of your contributions to our organization. And, as always, if you have ideas or want to become more involved, please reach out!



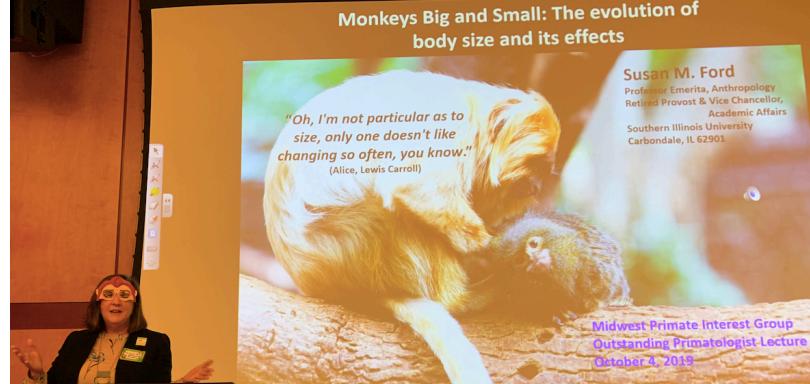
Best of luck to all of you braving the Midwest winter!

Sincerely,
Katie Amato

MPIG 2019 MEETING RECAP



Our 2019 annual MPIG meeting was held at Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, Illinois. We welcomed 63 participants from states across the Midwest (Missouri to Michigan), all professional levels (undergraduate to emerita), and representing a diversity of academic departments and zoos. The 32 research presentations covered such diverse aspects of primatology as captive enrichment, cognition, social behavior, physiology, disease, locomotion, conservation and paleontology. We were also happy to honor Dr. Susan Ford of Southern Illinois University with the 2019 Distinguished Primatologist Award; Dr. Ford presented a keynote presentation detailing her work on body size evolution in platyrhines as well as her personal trajectory in her scientific career.



WHAT'S NEW!

Have a Twitter account? Follow our brand new twitter page to keep up with all of the exciting things we have planned for the upcoming year!



Follow us!
@MidwestPrimates

We are also pleased to report that during this last year we finally launched our official MPIG website: www.midwestprimates.org. Bookmark this site for all things MPIG, including past and future MPIG meeting information.



MPIG – Midwest Primate Interest Group

- A scientific community for primatologists in the Midwest United States -

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Home

Hello and Welcome!

MPIG is a professional association founded in 2004 for primatologists practicing in the midwestern United States. Our ranks include professors, students, zoo professionals, conservation practitioners, and more. Our annual meetings occur in the fall and you would be most welcome to join us!

MPIG 2020 AT THE LINCOLN PARK ZOO

The annual Midwest Primate Interest Group meeting this year will be held this Fall (date TBD) at the Lincoln Park Zoo in Chicago! Accommodations and more information will be posted closer to the conference on our website, Facebook page, and new Twitter account. We look forward to seeing you all there!

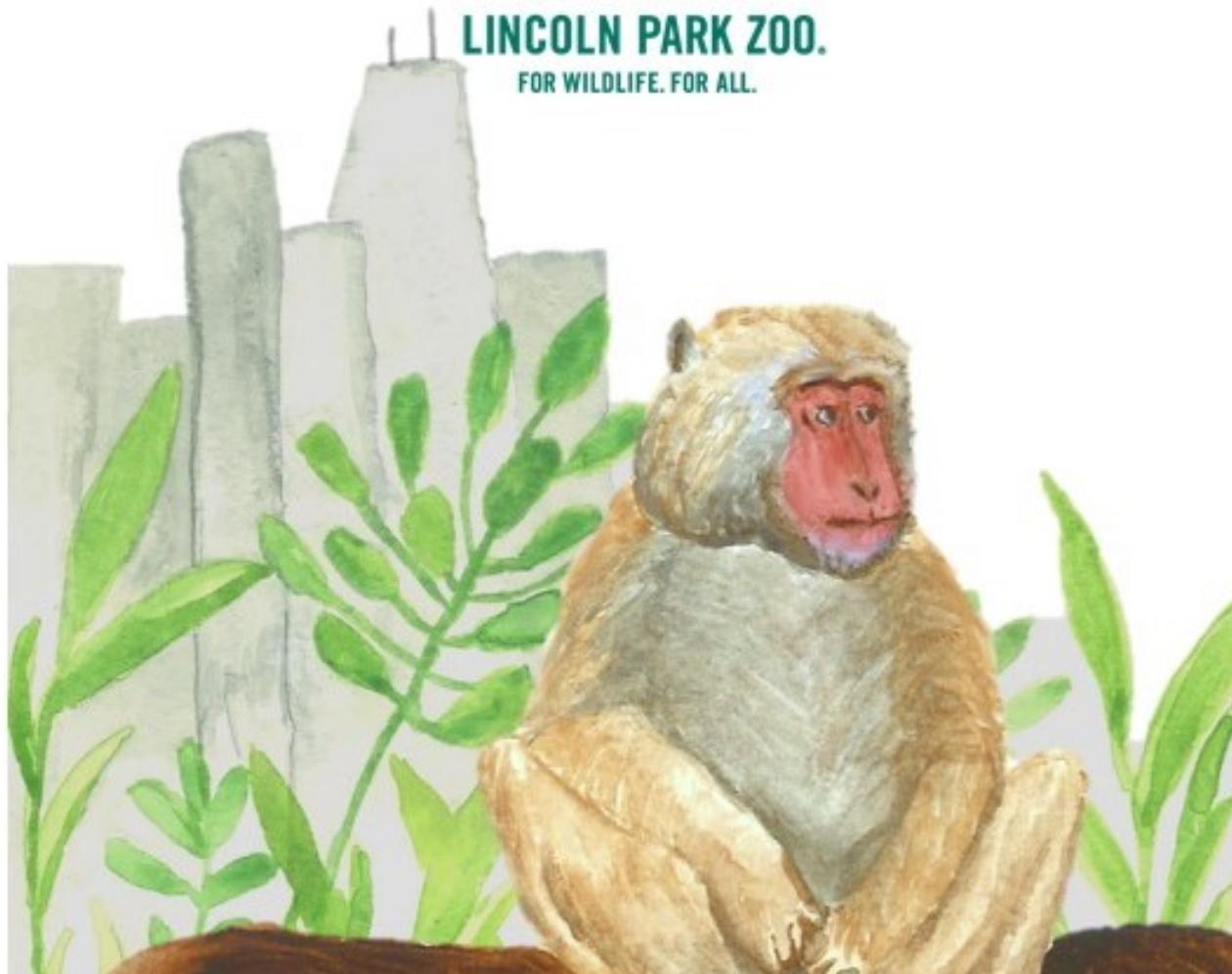
Save the Date!

Midwest Primate Interest Group 2020

To be hosted by the Lester E. Fisher Center for the
Study and Conservation of Apes, Lincoln Park Zoo



LINCOLN PARK ZOO.
FOR WILDLIFE. FOR ALL.



CALLING ALL LAB PIs!

For the benefit of furthering the research capacity of our student members, MPIG is creating an online repository of the available laboratory services and equipment found within the region. Our hope is to create a space where students and others can find pertinent information needed to better develop projects, work out methods, and potentially build collaborations. Working on a regional scale helps reduce travel time and costs, and promotes partnerships between MPIG members.

If you would like to participate and be listed on the MPIG website, please submit the following information using the example format: PI name, lab specialty, location, analysis capabilities, types of equipment, costs/fees, preferred contact information, and any other pertinent information you feel is appropriate (lab name, website, etc). Below is an example of a submission:

PI name: Mitch Irwin

Lab specialty: nutritional analysis of primate foods

Location: Northern Illinois University

Capabilities: crude protein, available protein, simple sugars, lipid content, fiber (NDF/ADF/lignin), tannins

Equipment: Leco nitrogen analyzer, ANKOM fiber analyzer, ANKOM Daisy incubator, ThermoScientific Spectrophotometer

Fees: project dependent, please contact

Contact: mirwin@niu.edu

Website: <https://www.niu.edu/anthropology/about/faculty-directory/irwin.shtml>



INTERVIEW WITH A PRIMATOLOGIST



Steve Ross is the Director of the Lester E. Fisher Center at Lincoln Park Zoo and has been for the past 20 years. He served as the Chimpanzee Species Survival Plan chair from 2002-2017. He has researched animals from otters to pigs, but his contributions to chimps in the U.S and around the world are unparalleled, so it is no surprise that we wanted to interview him for the MPIG newsletter.



CD: How did you know you wanted to study animals, specifically behavior and welfare?

SR: I had been interested in animals my whole life, and I can't remember an exact time when it started. I do remember that when I was little, probably around eight or so, I would rent National Geographic VHS tapes about apes. I was always fascinated by chimpanzees and soon became known as "chimp boy" at school. If we ever had to do a project in school, whether for history, art, or science, I would always do my project on chimps. Most kids get money or extravagant gifts for their graduation, but for my high school graduation, my parents got me the book *The Chimpanzees of Gombe*, which I loved. At this point in my life, I had still never seen a chimp before, mostly because I grew up in Canada where the nearest zoo was about a 4-hour drive away, in Toronto, and even there they did not house chimpanzees.

CD: How did your career in primate welfare begin?

SR: I studied zoology in college at the University of Guelph, and my first job out of college was working as a research assistant evaluating pig welfare and alternative housing on a farm in Canada. I studied mother-infant relationships in pigs as part of my research, which led me to finally working with primates in Puerto Rico. I worked as a volunteer research assistant studying free-ranging rhesus monkeys. After this opportunity, I did go back to working with pigs until I saw a job for an environmental enrichment technician at a lab in Texas. At first, they had me working with the monkeys there, but I knew there were chimps housed at this facility and within a week I was working with the chimps. This was the first time I ever saw a chimp in person. There, I did research on welfare and conducted computer-assisted enrichment with the chimps. We examined questions like the behavioral effects of control vs. passive exposure to joystick-controlled computer tasks and giving chimps control over their environmental enrichment.

CD: When and why did you come to Lincoln Park Zoo?

SR: When I came to Lincoln Park Zoo in January 2000, I was hired as a Behavior Specialist intended to help design a new state of the art building for the apes, which is the building we are currently in, the Regenstein Center for African Apes. We studied the chimps and gorillas and looked at their behavior, space usage and preference, if they liked elevated areas or not, etc. One thing we learned was that they did not like open spaces much and really preferred corners, so we incorporated a lot of angles into the design so that there were many corners for the animals to go in. We also conducted visitor studies to help inform the design of the building. When the new building opened in 2004, the Fisher Center was created. The Fisher Center was created so that we could monitor the behavior and welfare of the apes and ask questions about their lives in captivity, and we have been doing such ever since. When we opened the Fisher Center, Elizabeth Lonsdorf was serving as the Director of the center and I was working as an animal behavior specialist, then the Assistant Director. During this time I obtained my PhD at the University of Copenhagen using research I had conducted for the past five years. In 2012 I took over the role of Director.

CD: Do you have any advice for early career primatologists?

SR: Unlike the path I took, it is important to think about questions rather than species. If your question is too species specific, then you are cornered into working with only that species rather than asking broad questions that can be applied to many different primate species. It's worked out okay for me, but in general I think a question-based approach is more likely to lead to a successful path as a scientist.

CD: What is your most interesting animal story?

SR: A lot of people already know this, but I technically named my son after a chimp. There was a chimp at Yerkes Primate Center in Atlanta named Drew. Drew and I had a really close connection and it left a long-lasting impression on me, so when my wife and I had our first child, we named him Drew.

Know a primatologist that you would like featured in the next newsletter? Contact us at midwestprimates@gmail.com to submit your nomination!

UNCOMING MEETINGS OF INTEREST

Animal Behavior Society

<https://www.animalbehaviorsociety.org/web/embeded/STDABS2020-Program.pdf>

American Society of Mammalogists

<https://mammalmeetings.org/>

American Association of Physical Anthropologists

<https://physanth.org/annual-meetings/89th-annual-meeting-los-angeles-california-2020/>

American Society of Primatologists

<https://www.asp.org/meetings/>

International Primatological Society

<http://www.internationalprimatologicalsociety.org/meetings.cfm>

Ecological Society of America

<https://www.esa.org/saltlake/>

Society for Integrative and Comparative Biology

<http://sicb.org/meetings/2021/callsymp.php>

MPIG BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President: Dr. Katherine Amato, Northwestern University

Vice-President: Dr. Mitchell Irwin, Northern Illinois University

Treasurer: Dr. Kelly Lane-DeGraaf, Fontbonne University

Communications Director: Michelle Benavidez, Indiana University – Bloomington

Education Officer: Dr. Tim Bransford, Northern Illinois University

MPIG COMMUNICATIONS TEAM MEMBERS

Jocelyn Woods, Chicago Zoological Society

Christina Doelling, Lincoln Park Zoo

WANT TO SERVE AS A BOARD MEMBER FOR THE 2020 – 2022 TERM?
CONTACT US AT MIDWESTPRIMATES@GMAIL.COM FOR
INFORMATION.

