

Colorado State University's Bestgen named outstanding researcher of the year

Colorado State University's Larval Fish Laboratory Director Kevin Bestgen is the Upper Colorado River Endangered Fish Recovery Program's Outstanding Researcher of the Year. Kevin is one of the foremost experts on native and endangered fish of the Southwest. For more than two decades, he has studied fish reproduction and ecology and the effects of regulated rivers and introduced species on native fish communities. His research has greatly increased biologists' understanding of habitat needs of the fish and contributed to development of flow recommendations.

"Kevin brings to the Recovery Program a tremendous background of integrity and experience," said last year's recipient, Doug Osmundson, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service biologist, who presented the award. "Not only is Kevin an outstanding fish biologist and aquatic ecologist, but he has also become the biostatistician that many of us in the upper basin turn to for help.

"Kevin's colleagues are impressed with his level of professionalism, his hard work and perseverance at tackling questions, and his innovative way of looking at things differently and not accepting the standard answers."

Throughout his career, Kevin has worked to unravel the mysteries of what fish need to survive in desert rivers. His first work involved surveys of fish populations of the South Platte River and conservation of greenback cutthroat trout for the Colorado Division of Wildlife. Kevin also worked extensively in the American Southwest in the Gila,

Pecos, Rio Grande and San Juan rivers. His studies of endangered silvery minnow in the Rio Grande laid much of the foundation for today's understanding of that river system.

From 1986 to 1989, Kevin was associate curator of fishes for the Museum of Southwestern Biology and a research associate for the University of

New Mexico. In 1989, he returned to the Larval Fish Lab where he has been director since 1997. He continues to conduct important research for the Recovery Program, including a recently completed study on the status of Colorado pikeminnow in the Green River Basin in Utah and Colorado.

Kevin has authored and co-authored over 50 technical reports and journal articles.

"Kevin's extensive knowledge of the Colorado River system and the endangered fishes has been crucial to helping us determine management actions that we hope will lead to their recovery," said Recovery Program Director Bob Muth. "He is a dedicated scientist who won't give up until he finds answers."



ROBERT COMPTON

RESEARCHER OF THE YEAR KEVIN BESTGEN SORTS SMALL-BODIED, PREY-SIZED FISHES BY SPECIES IN THE YAMPA RIVER TO DETERMINE POPULATION RESPONSES TO THE RECOVERY PROGRAM'S NONNATIVE FISH MANAGEMENT ACTIONS.

Kevin was both surprised and humbled by his award.

"I have very much enjoyed working with the Recovery Program to conserve endangered fishes in the Upper Colorado River Basin," Kevin said. "Receiving the Researcher of the Year award was personally gratifying because it acknowledged that the Recovery Program and my peers considered the work of the Larval Fish Laboratory and myself as contributing to those conservation efforts." ◀

Editor's note: The Recovery Program presents this award each year to an individual who has demonstrated a longstanding commitment to the recovery of the endangered fishes and who has made significant contributions to understanding their biology and environmental needs.