

by Jamie Rappaport Clark

Partners for Species Recovery



Jamie Rappaport Clark, Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
USFWS photo

With this issue of the *Endangered Species Bulletin*, I am reminded of the editorial, reprinted on the opposing page, that was written by the American Zoo and Aquarium Association's Executive Director, Syd Butler. His reflections on last year's anniversary of the Endangered Species Act and the future of the Wyoming toad (*Bufo hemiophrys baxteri*) speaks quite directly to the focus of this edition of the *Bulletin*.

The American Zoo and Aquarium Association and its nearly 200 member institutions have been partners in the conservation and recovery of endangered species with the Fish and Wildlife Service for a long time. Some of those partnerships have been extraordinarily critical. They provided the crucial opportunity to turn species such as the California condor (*Gymnogyps californianus*), red wolf (*Canis rufus*), and black-footed ferret (*Mustela nigripes*) from almost certain extinction toward recovery. Though these efforts deserve our highest praise and appreciation, they are, as Syd points out, only part of the story. The whole story includes the efforts to save dozens and dozens of smaller, less well known species that have become imperiled by human activities.

The choice of the Wyoming toad for the cover of the AZA's March 1998 issue of *Communique* pleased me as well. When I look at the list of more than 1,100 species of plants and animals protected by the Endangered Species Act, it is easy to pick out the "popular" species, the ones that most people know. Feathered or furred, they are the stars of many nature documentaries and magazine covers. They often symbolize

such admired qualities as strength, bravery, and speed. The effort to help people understand that toads, freshwater clams, insects, and other animals and plants are also worthy of saving is at times a daunting task.

But then I think about a species such as the Wyoming toad, and the many friends of this amphibian who are helping to save it. I take encouragement from the knowledge that zoos and aquariums are undertaking similar efforts all across this nation for all types of endangered species. As this issue of the *Bulletin* will share with you, zoos and aquariums are not just about so-called "charismatic" animals, nor are they only about creatures from distant exotic lands.

Zoos and aquariums are also on the cutting edge in fields such as conservation education. Through state-of-the-art exhibits, hands-on encounters, distance learning, school programs, and other innovative means, the people who make up this community share their love, enthusiasm, and curiosity about life on this planet with millions of us every year. I extend my thanks and appreciation to the directors, professional staff, technicians, volunteers, and friends of our Nation's zoos and aquariums in their efforts to breed endangered species, conduct research, and rekindle our fascination with the natural world.

Jamie Rappaport Clark is the Director of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.