



News Release

For Immediate Release
June 1, 2015

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Professor Brian Bowen receives prestigious 2015 Kobe Award

Eminent University of Hawai'i at Mānoa scientist receives lifetime achievement award for sea turtle migration research



Dr. Brian Bowen, research professor at the [Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology](#) and [University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program](#) funded researcher, was awarded the 2015 Kobe Award for lifetime achievement in aquatic biology.

The award, established in 2011 by Suma Aqualife Park in Kobe, Japan, is given to only one scientist each year in honor of their considerable worldwide achievements. Past winners include Dr. Vera Maria Ferreria da Silva from Brazil; Dr. J.O.

Miller from Scotland; Dr. Hans Fricke from Germany; and Dr. J. Emmett Duffy from the United States.

Dr. Bowen was recognized for his research on sea turtle migrations using DNA fingerprints to assist in the conservation of this ancient and endangered species. Specifically, Dr. Bowen's research showed that Japanese loggerhead turtle hatchlings leave their nesting beaches in Japan and cross the Pacific Ocean to feed off Baja, California. Previously this was deemed impossible by most scientists, but Dr. Bowen and his colleagues were able to confirm the findings using DNA fingerprinting.

Loggerhead sea turtles face threats on both nesting beaches and in the marine environment. The primary threat to loggerhead turtle populations worldwide is mortality in fishing gear, largely in driftnets (which are now banned) and other open ocean fishing gear. The research conducted by Dr. Bowen and his colleagues also demonstrated the importance of international cooperation in the conservation of sea turtles since the turtles spend so much time at sea in international waters.

Suma Aqualife Park is a world-class public education facility and research institute in Kobe, Japan, which has been in operation since 1957. The aquarium curator, Dr. Naoki Kamezaki, is also an expert on sea turtles and is the founder and director of the Sea Turtle Association of Japan. Dr. Kamezaki, along with Dr. George Balazs from the NOAA Fisheries Pacific Islands Fisheries Science Center in Honolulu, were integral members of the research team that demonstrated the loggerhead turtles trans-Pacific migration. The research was published in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* in a journal article titled "Trans-Pacific migrations of the loggerhead turtle (*Caretta caretta*) demonstrated with mitochondrial DNA markers".

Dr. Bowen earned an M.A. from the Virginia Institute of Marine Science, a Ph.D. in genetics from the University of Georgia, and subsequently worked as a post-doctoral researcher and assistant professor at the University of Florida. He has been a research professor at the Hawai'i Institute of Marine Biology at the [University of Hawai'i at Mānoa](http://www2.hawaii.edu/~toonen/ToBo_Website/Brian_Bowen.html) since March 2003. Dr. Bowen is the author of over 200 publications, including contributions in the journals Science, Nature, Proceedings of the National Academy of Science USA, Proceedings of the Royal Society of London, and many more. He is also a fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, and a marine turtle specialist for the IUCN Species Survival Commission.

For more information on the Kobe Award and past award recipients please visit:
<http://sumasui.jp/tyousa/cat54/kobe-award.html>

For more information and Dr. Brian Bowen's complete biography visit:
http://www2.hawaii.edu/~toonen/ToBo_Website/Brian_Bowen.html

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The University of Hawai'i Sea Grant College Program is part of the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa's prestigious School of Ocean and Earth Science and Technology. It supports an innovative program of research, education and extension services directed to the improved understanding and stewardship of coastal and marine resources of the state, region and nation. Science serving Hawai'i and the Pacific for over 45 years.



Photo caption: Kobe Award committee (left to right) Mr. Hiroyuki Yoshida, Director of the Suma Aqualife Park; Dr. Naoki Kamezaki; Dr. Brian Bowen; Dr. Katsufumi Sato; and Dr. Masanori Kouda.