

One Primatology: Science Promoting Conservation and Health for All Primates

Joseph M Erwin

Research Professor, Department of Anthropology, George Washington University, Washington

***Corresponding Author:** Joseph M Erwin, Research Professor, Department of Anthropology, George Washington University, Washington.

Received: August 03, 2016; **Published:** September 20, 2016

Volume 1 Issue 1 September 2016

© All Rights Reserved by Joseph M. Erwin.

Perhaps the greatest value of primatology is that it stands at the crossroads of many fields and interests. At its best, primatology includes communication and cooperation among people who scientifically study many different primate species using diverse methods to amplify understanding of a multitude of biological, health, behavioral, and social processes. The knowledge gained can benefit primates, whether in nature, or in human care, in sanctuaries, laboratories, breeding colonies, or zoological gardens. Effective conservation and care must be evidence based. Actualizing the promise of primatology requires people of good will to convey to one another their experiences and research results, and to seek to understand and learn from each other's work.

ONE PRIMATOLOGY is an initiative to renew and refresh professional commitments to constructive efforts to advance the scientific study, understanding, care, and conservation of primates—with a goal of increasing knowledge that benefits all of them. Announcement of this initiative coincides with discussions to be held during the 2016 International Primatological Society and American Society of Primatologists Joint Meeting in Chicago, Illinois, USA, in August, 2016. This effort offered in the same spirit as the One Health Initiative that seeks integration of human and veterinary medicine. We seek constructive research and action to counter campaigns that pit scientists against one another and advocate for ignorance rather than knowledge.

Some Fundamental Principles:

1. People are Primates: The Primate Order includes more than 475 distinct living species recognized by zoologists—among them, modern humans. Primatology, the scientific study of primates, includes the study of all extant and extinct primate species, including humans. A failure to recognize this fact needlessly divides the scientific community into those concerned primarily with human well-being and those especially involved with nonhuman primates. Accepting that all humans are primates can promote appropriate consideration and respect for all primates, and can emphasize that we all share and depend on planet Earth.

2. Health Matters: Many health issues are not species specific. Some of the pathogens and environmental threats to human public health, also threaten wild primate populations—although, not necessarily in the same way. Understanding the health issues of each primate population can amplify benefits for all primates. Natural and spontaneous instances of pathobiology provide especially powerful insights. Monitoring wild primate populations for emerging pathogens is critically important, both for wildlife conservation and human public health.

Citation: Joseph M Erwin. "One Primatology: Science Promoting Conservation and Health for All Primates". *Multidisciplinary Advances in Veterinary* 1.1 (2016): 1-2.

3. Care Requires Knowledge: In many places around the world, primates are under human care. The nonhuman primates are mainly in zoological gardens, breeding facilities, laboratories, rehabilitation centers, and sanctuaries. Meanwhile humans are in hospitals, sanitariums, mental hospitals, penal institutions, refugee camps, and retirement homes—not to mention an endless variety of rural and urban environments. The requirements of human and nonhuman primates under human care are similar, including issues of health, sanitation, nutrition, and humane considerations. Effective conservation of nonhuman primate populations in nature requires attention to their health status, which includes the human health and economic context.

4. Partnerships Add Value: Wonderful examples exist of collaborations among physicians, veterinarians, neurobiologists, physiologists, anatomists, psychologists, anthropologists, mammalogists, zoologists, and other scientists working together constructively to promote wellness, conservation, and environmentally responsible economic development in ways that sustainably benefit human primate and nonhuman primate communities. These constructive activities can serve as models of how evidence can enhance understanding for the benefit of all primates.

5. Understanding Depends on Research: A vast array of scientific methods is available for the appropriate and humane study of primates. Some of these are very precise, and others less so. The choice of experimental versus epidemiological methods may influence what is learned, the reliability of knowledge, and the confidence one may have in the findings. Detailed understanding of research design is essential, along with how methods address epistemological and ethical concerns. There is no easily identifiable line differentiating methods appropriate for use with humans and nonhuman primates. In fact, when feasible, much is to be gained by direct comparisons across species using identical or similar methods.

6. Technology Enables Progress: Technical feasibility varies situation ally. What can be done, is not necessarily what should be done; obviously, some information is more urgently required than is other evidence. Investigators should not cling too long to traditional methods when superior alternatives become available. Minimally invasive methods should be preferred over more invasive techniques, especially if invasive interventions might have enduring harmful consequences. The ethical issues are not so different for health interventions involving human and nonhuman primates. The harm of performing a procedure must be weighed against the damage that would result from not doing so.

7. Respect Counters Divisiveness: A unified approach to primatology is needed that honors all primates as worthy sources of information and understanding, and acknowledges and respects the importance of diverse perspectives and methods of learning from and about primates, and recognizes that what is learned from each primate has potential benefit to all primates. Without such a unified approach, the field can become fragmented and divided into politically polarized camps that work against one another. Such strife is an obstacle to cooperation and communication and limits realization of the promise of primatology.

The One Primatology Initiative is intended as a positive effort to promote cohesion and cooperation among those who seek to learn from, care for, and conserve primates, recognizing that humans are primates and are fully entitled to due ethical, professional, and scientific consideration.

Joseph M. Erwin, Ph.D. incorporated the American Society of Primatologists in 1976 with Co-Founders Gary Mitchell and Terry Maple. He became Founding Editor of the American Journal of Primatology in 1980 and was Series Editor for Comparative Primate Biology. He is currently an Independent Consulting Primatologist and serves as Research Professor at the George Washington University in Washington, D.C., where he maintains active scientific collaborations.