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JOHNNY MORRIS AWARDED THE AUDUBON MEDAL, ONE OF CONSERVATION'S HIGHEST HONORS

Morris is only 58th conservationist to receive the Audubon Medal in its 114-year history

NEW YORK – The National Audubon Society presented one of the most prestigious awards in conservation, the Audubon Medal, to Bass Pro Shops founder and legendary conservationist Johnny Morris and his family in a gala event February 7 at The Plaza Hotel in New York.

Morris has spent his life tirelessly working to preserve wildlife and wild places so that future generations can be as energized and excited by nature as he has been. Morris has long pointed to his earliest days of being out with his family on the streams of the Missouri Ozarks as the inspiration for his extraordinary success with Bass Pro Shops.

Given in recognition of outstanding achievement in the field of conservation and environmental protection, The Audubon Medal was first given out in 1947 to Hugh Hammond Bennett, a pioneer in understanding soil erosion. Morris is the 58th recipient of the medal, joining conservation icons such as Nobel Peace Prize winner Oscar Arias, President Jimmy Carter, Academy Award-winning director and actor Robert Redford, beloved British natural historian Sir David Attenborough, CNN founder Ted Turner, author Rachel Carson and lauded biologist Edward O. Wilson.



Johnny Morris (center) accepts the Medal with son John Paul from National Audubon Society CEO David Yarnold (right).

“To be awarded the Audubon medal is one of the proudest and most humbling experiences of my life. To be included among the other 58 conservationists to receive this high honor alongside such visionary leaders as Walt Disney, J.N. ‘Ding’ Darling, President Jimmy Carter and others, is a great honor. I’m very proud to share this with my family, and our extended family – the many passionate, conservation-minded people in our company and the sportsmen and women we are blessed to serve,” said noted conservationist and Bass Pro Shops founder Johnny Morris.

“What many people don’t realize is that John James Audubon and President Theodore Roosevelt were not only heroes in conservation, they were also sportsmen and hunters. Over many hours spent in the field hunting, they gained a better appreciation for our nation’s fish and wildlife and the habitats required to sustain them,” added Morris. “I hope they are both looking down smiling and happy that we are all here as one united, inclusive family working with passion to carry on the important mission they outlined for us many years ago – to be good stewards of God’s creation and to protect the wild places so that future generations, our kids and grandkids, can have the same opportunities we have to experience the wonders of the natural world.”

Morris’ passion for 40 years has been to help children feel the same awe and wonder of the outdoors that he has felt. Morris has worked with every Republican and Democratic administration since 1978 – when Audubon Medal recipient Jimmy Carter was in office – to advance significant conservation causes. He has often been called a modern-day Teddy Roosevelt.

In 2017 – with Teddy Roosevelt’s Great, Great Grandson Simon Roosevelt in attendance – Morris opened the 350,000 square foot Wonders of Wildlife National Museum and Aquarium (WOW) in his hometown of Springfield, Mo. It is the largest conservation attraction in the world. In 2018, WOW worked closely with Audubon to unveil “The Year of the Bird,” an extraordinary exhibit that celebrates the 1918 Migratory Bird Treaty Act. The National Audubon Society is dedicated to protecting birds and the places they need for more than 60 million birders across the United States.

“Audubon has been a force for good in conservation for more than a century,” Morris said. “They began by working with a personal hero of mine, Teddy Roosevelt, to establish the first National Wildlife Refuge. Today, we share a vision to inspire future generations of conservationists to carry on America’s heritage of protecting our natural resources.”

National conservation leaders commemorate the occasion

Hundreds of leading conservationists from across the country gathered in New York to honor Morris and his contributions, which follow in the footsteps of the nation’s greatest conservationists.

“The award is important for conservationists across the political spectrum, as both a reminder and a contemporary acknowledgement of the essential role of hunters and anglers in conservation,” said Great, Great Grandson Simon Roosevelt. “First and foremost, however, the Medal is a rightful recognition of the broad scope of Johnny’s dedication to conservation and his ever-forward-looking leadership.”

Morris was introduced by Colin O’Mara, CEO of the National Wildlife Federation, America’s oldest and largest conservation organization with six million members, who discussed the Bass Pro founder’s impact on the next generation.

“Johnny has instilled a love of wildlife in millions upon millions of children across America,” said O’Mara, who has partnered with Morris to advance national legislation to protect fish and wildlife and develop education programs at Wonders of Wildlife. “He’s advancing conservation in every part of the country. And he’s leaving a legacy that will inspire young conservationists for centuries.”

Morris accepted the award together with his wife Jeanie and children John Paul, Megan, Julie and Jennifer.