

**2015 Recipient of the Oscar Elton Sette Award
presented by the Marine Fisheries Section
of the American Fisheries Society**

Dr. David O. Conover

David Conover has spent almost his entire professional career at Stony Brook University, beginning in 1981 as Assistant Professor in what is now the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, advancing to full Professor in 1993, and assuming the position of Dean in 2003. Leaving Stony Brook in mid-2010 for a 3½-year stint with the National Science Foundation, he returned in late 2013 to take over as Vice President for Research, a position he presently holds. His distinguished career reflects sustained excellence in marine fisheries research, teaching, and administration, and his achievements in all three areas have had a profound influence on marine fishery biology.

In the category of research, his basic and applied investigations have earned international recognition through his unique application of principles of evolutionary biology and fishery ecology which has produced several novel findings important to fishery conservation and management:

- He was the first to document the presence of environmental sex determination in fishes, notably the Atlantic silverside (*Menidia menidia*), and demonstrate multiple pathways of evolution in this trait.
- His work on the role of growth rate evolution highlighted the importance of counter-gradient variation and stimulated more widely the study of local adaptation in marine fish populations.
- He demonstrated the important role that size-selective winter mortality plays in the evolution of numerous life history traits.
- His work on the evolutionary implications of size-selective harvest has recast the debate over the long-term effects of harvest on fish populations.

He has authored or co-authored about 120 peer-reviewed publications, including a number in the prestigious journals *Science* and *Nature*, with more than 7,000 citations of these publications to his credit.

In the category of teaching, David has been an excellent instructor throughout his career. He taught multiple graduate-level courses in fish ecology and fisheries, and led topical seminars. David's mentorship style with his graduate students (33 MS and 9 PhD students) was remarkably gauged to the needs of each individual student. Some needed more guidance, and Dave was available to help in either the laboratory or the field. For students that were more independent, he gave them greater latitude in guiding their research, with occasional steering in the right direction. Importantly, the work of his graduate students was almost always published because David's mentorship ensured a high-quality research product. His former students and post-docs have gone on to successful careers in academia, non-profits, and state and federal fisheries agencies. In addition to graduate students, David also mentored several undergraduate students,

some of whom published their undergraduate research and went on to successful careers in fisheries.

Dr. Conover began his administrative career as Dean of the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences at Stony Brook University in 2003 and continued in that post until 2010. Along with numerous other significant accomplishments during his tenure, he led the transition of the Marine Sciences Research Center into the School of Marine and Atmospheric Sciences in 2007. From 2010 until 2013, he held the position of Director of the Division of Ocean Sciences in the National Science Foundation where he developed and managed a \$350 million annual budget, the second largest division in NSF, and led a number of new initiatives in research, facility construction, and planning. Upon returning to Stony Brook in late 2013, he was appointed and currently serves as Vice President for Research where he is broadly responsible for encouraging and facilitating excellence in scholarship, research, and creative activities, encouraging investment in research infrastructure, increasing external funding from major public and private funding sources, advancing translational research for successful technology transfer and economic development, and ensuring compliance with all applicable laws and regulations related to the responsible conduct of research.

Lastly, David has been a good citizen in the fisheries community, serving on numerous committees and editorships. For example, David served 10 years on the Mid-Atlantic Fishery Management Council's Scientific and Statistical Committee, which can be a demanding service. David has also been an active member of the American Fisheries Society since the early days of his career. He and his students have been regular meeting attendees and participants at the AFS annual meetings and the Early Life History Section meetings (larval fish conferences). David also served as Editor of the *Transactions of the American Fisheries Society* from 1999 to 2001, arguably one of the most time-consuming editorships within AFS.

The large number of letters of recommendation and support submitted on his behalf by former students is vivid testimony to the love and respect for their former mentor. Clearly, Dr. David O. Conover has been an outstanding member of the marine biology fraternity of scientists and is truly a most deserving recipient of the 2015 Oscar Elton Sette Award.

--Prepared by Emory Anderson, Chairman, Oscar E. Sette Award Committee, Marine Fisheries Section