

National //

# Joshua Tewksbury, new director of the Smithsonian

Tewksbury has more than two decades of research experience on environmental conservation and biodiversity



Panamanian scientist Oris Sanjur held the position of acting director of this institution.  
Ceded

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The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute (STRI) appointed Joshua Tewksbury as its new director, effective April 6, 2021.

Tewksbury, who is interim executive director and director of the Future Earth global center in the United States, is an ecologist with more than two decades of experience in research on environmental conservation and biodiversity, and for almost a decade he has served as executive director at international research institutes.

He has a degree in field biology from Prescott College and a doctorate from the University of Montana in biology and ecology of organisms.

" The future of the tropics is the future of our world, and there is no other institute that has done more for our understanding of tropical ecosystems than STRI. I am honored and excited to join the Smithsonian and to have the opportunity to lead the world's leading tropical research institute at a time when the importance of the tropics and their cultures has never been greater," Tewksbury said.

The biologist will be the successor of Matthew Larsen, who served as director of STRI from August 2014 until his retirement in June 2020. Oris Sanjur, associate director of Scientific Administration at STRI, made history by serving as the first Panamanian to be

interim director and says goodbye after leading the institute for the last nine months.

As director, Tewksbury will supervise more than 400 employees, an annual budget of \$35 million and the institute's

research facilities in Panama and field sites in Africa, Asia and the Americas. In addition to its resident scientists and support staff, it will receive the 1,400 visiting scientists, pre- and post-doctoral fellows and students who arrive from all over the world, annually.

### **Their work in conservation**

Within Future Earth, a global research program dedicated to sustainability and global change, Tewksbury leads a network of tens of thousands of scientists and manages a wide range of projects, programs and study alliances focused on conservation.

In his current position at Future Earth, he oversees dozens of interdisciplinary research projects, from the evaluation of factors that threaten biodiversity to understanding the relationship between human well-being and the environment.

The other facets of Tewksbury are summarized as follows:

- **He has founded initiatives such as the Earth Leadership Program Tierra), which supports the development of skills for academic researchers studying the challenges of sustainability.**
- **He was founding director of the Luc Hoffman Institute (2012-2015), a global research center within the World Wildlife Fund International, specializing in conservation science.**
- **He is co-founder and executive editor of Anthropocene magazine, a publication that highlights solutions for sustainability.**
- **He holds teaching positions at the University of Colorado Boulder in the State of Colorado and in the Department of Environmental Science and Policy at George Mason University.**
- **He was appointed a senior academic at the Colorado State University School of Global Environmental Sustainability and is a member of the Board of Environmental Studies and Toxicology of the National Academy of Sciences.**
- **He has published more than 85 scientific articles on conservation, climate change and natural history, including the relationships and diversity of tropical plants, animals and fungi.**

"Tewksbury's professional career in environmental conservation sciences demonstrates a long-term commitment to work across disciplinary and geographical borders. He is an experienced and forward-looking leader, with the vision to guide the impactful biodiversity research that the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute has advanced for more than a century," said Lonnie G. Bunch, Smithsonian secretary.

## **SelectionThe**

members who formed the search committee for the new director of STRI included John Davis, acting director, Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum; Lisa Barnett,

director of development, STRI; Phyllis D. Coley, distinguished professor of biology at the University of Utah; Gladys Navarro de Gerbaud, president of the Smithsonian Foundation of Panama; Fernando Santos Granero, senior research anthropologist, STRI; Steven Hoch, president of the advisory board of STRI; Steven L. Monfort, John and Adrienne Mars Director of the Smithsonian National Zoo and Conservation Biology Institute; and Rachel Page, research biologist at STRI.

The Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute in Panama City is a unit of the Smithsonian Institution. The institute promotes understanding of tropical nature and its importance for the well-being of humanity, trains students to carry out research in the tropics, and promotes conservation through public awareness of the beauty and importance of tropical ecosystems.

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