

Fisheries professor Robert Arlinghaus is honored with the German Communicator Prize 2020

Germany's highest award in science communication goes to a knowledge disseminator for more sustainability in freshwater management and fisheries.



Robert Arlinghaus has been angling since he was a child, now he is professor for fisheries management at HU and IGB. (Photo: IGB/D. Ausserhofer)

The German Communicator Prize is awarded annually by the German Science Foundation (DFG) and the Stifterverband. It is endowed with 50,000 euros and aims to strengthen the exchange between science and society. Professor Robert Arlinghaus from the Leibniz- Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB) and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin will receive the 2020 Award for his outstanding communication on sustainable fisheries, navigating the tension between the use and conservation of underwater biodiversity.

2020 is a 20th anniversary - for the German Communicator Prize and for this year's prizewinner. Since the beginning of his doctorate in 2000, the social ecologist and fisheries scientist Robert Arlinghaus (44) has been researching the social, economic and ecological aspects of sustainable fisheries. As a five-year-old he was drawn to the Mediterranean Sea with his fishing rod – today his research focuses on recreational fishing. Fisheries form dynamic human-environment relationships, and these must be developed sustainably.

The research of Robert Arlinghaus and his team helps to improve the ecological status of freshwaters, to ensure the supply of fish as food, to foster the recreational experience, and to protect fish populations. The latter is an important social objective in view of the rapid decline of freshwater biodiversity. "Robert Arlinghaus succeeds in linking an apparently special topic, such as

recreational fisheries, with the socially relevant issues of sustainability, environmental protection and the responsible use of nature at higher levels," said the jury of the German Communicator Prize in recognition of his work.

Recreational fisheries is an important part of fishing, not a niche hobby

Early scientific findings of Robert Arlinghaus have already turned the view of the alleged niche hobby of angling upside down. Recreational fishing is the most important form of fishing in inland waters of all industrial nations. A total of around 3.3 million people in Germany go fishing for leisure, taking about ten times more fish from the waters than commercial lake and river fisheries. In economic terms, recreational fishing is at least as important as all other forms of fishing – including industrial fishing and fish processing and marketing. Recreational fishing alone provides 52,000 jobs to the German economy. Where many people use lakes, rivers and the coast, effects on fish species and ecosystems cannot be ruled out. On the other hand, the approximately 10,000 angling clubs and associations are actively involved in the management and conservation of ecosystems and fish species. How can this commitment be optimised? Robert Arlinghaus and his team find answers to this question and communicate them effectively to water managers, nature conservationists, fisheries politicians and last but not least to anglers.

Research at the interface of natural and social sciences and transfer to society

Using natural scientific methods, Robert Arlinghaus and his team are investigating the ecological and evolutionary effects of fishing on fish stocks and waters. From a social and economic science perspective, the group is concerned with angler psychology, the behaviour of managers and fishers, society's perspective on fishing and ethical questions. Robert Arlinghaus' projects are always practice-oriented and transdisciplinary in the best sense of the word: from the development of the research concept to the implementation of the scientific findings, users and political decision-makers are involved in the research. "From the way anglers deal with freshwater ecosystems, we can learn a lot about how people deal with nature and the environment as a whole", says the prize winner and adds: "Anglers and their waters are a good example of closely linked social-ecological systems - this also makes the whole thing scientifically exciting and provides relevant contributions to the sustainability sciences".

Diverse science communication on equal footing with the stakeholders

Robert Arlinghaus uses a variety of formats of modern science communication in this dialogue with stakeholders: social media, podcasts, comics, explanatory films, science slams, columns, extensive lecture tours and joint experiments with fishing clubs. This commitment at eye level is also acknowledged by the jury: "This year's Communicator Prize awardee creates spaces for personal experience and with this approach achieves a high level of acceptance and trust in research and its results. In addition, he succeeds in embedding his research topic angling in larger socio-ecological contexts. By addressing political decision-makers on a regional, national and international level, he manages to shape the development of guidelines for sustainable fishing in a science-based way".

Robert Arlinghaus is delighted with this recognition: "The German Communicator Prize is a great recognition of our many years of efforts in science communication. In addition to the Communicator jury, my special thanks go to my team at the IGB and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, as well as to the Senate Chancellery for Science and Research Berlin and the Federal Ministry of Education and

Research with its programme for Social-Ecological Research. Without them, the work and - in a double sense - the prize for it would not have been possible. Good science communication requires time and financial resources and a highly motivated team. I am privileged and grateful that in our working group all this is available and lived. I am proud of my team!"

Congratulations from the Director of the IGB, the President of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin and the President of the Leibniz Association

The Director of the IGB, Professor Luc De Meester, underlines Robert Arlinghaus' engagement: "Freshwater ecosystems are very important to society and are therefore also heavily used as a resource. Sustainable management is therefore the key, and this can only be developed if the human factor is taken into account and when reliable data on the ecosystems, their use and the perspective of the people using them are available. Robert Arlinghaus manages this balancing act with a high level of personal commitment and professionalism. With his research and his mediation he manages to strike the right balance between protection and use of freshwaters, and achieves turning challenges into opportunities. His work has not only changed management decisions in angling clubs and associations, but has also helped to shape amendments to fisheries legislation and social discourse on inland and recreational fisheries. We at the IGB are very proud that Robert Arlinghaus is receiving such high recognition for this work".

Robert Arlinghaus is also a professor at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, where he heads the Division of Integrative Fisheries Management at the Albrecht-Daniel-Thaer Institute of Agricultural and Horticultural Sciences in Faculty of Life Sciences. He trains the fisheries managers of tomorrow in a masters study in fisheries biology and aquaculture that is unique in Germany. Robert Arlinghaus himself is a graduate of this programme.

The President of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Prof. Dr.-Ing. Dr. Sabine Kunst, says: "It has always been a central concern of the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin to communicate excellent research to society. Many of our scientists and scholars are committed to this in a unique way. One of them is Robert Arlinghaus. He deals with topics such as fisheries management, recreational fishing, fish diversity and aquatic conservation. To the media he is the "fish whisperer" and "angler professor", to the HU he is an outstanding researcher, whose inter- and transdisciplinary work is an inspiration for many sustainability researchers at the university. We are very pleased that Professor Arlinghaus is receiving this award, which constitutes such an important prize in the German scientific community."

The President of the Leibniz Association, Prof. Dr.-Ing. Matthias Kleiner, says: "Robert Arlinghaus is a scientific and communicative pioneer and ambassador of recreational fishing. For 20 years now, he has dedicated himself to this topic at Leibniz-IGB, the social relevance of which may not be apparent to many at first glance. He knows how to communicate his findings in a targeted manner to the general public and the angling community: whether it is the economic significance of recreational fisheries in the fishing sector, or new findings on ecological or evolutionary impacts, which have in part put long-held assumptions into perspective. Following the self-conception of the Leibniz Association, Robert Arlinghaus combines internationally recognised scientific achievements with skillful communication competence with society and is a worthy winner of the German Communicator Prize".

Short vita Robert Arlinghaus

Robert Arlinghaus grew up in a small town in the South Oldenburg Münsterland region. He studied environmental engineering and later agricultural and fisheries science at the Technical University of Berlin and the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin. His master thesis and dissertation at the Leibniz-Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries (IGB) have received several awards. After research stays in Austria and Canada, Robert Arlinghaus was appointed to a junior professorship for Inland Fisheries Management at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in 2006. In 2013 he was appointed as tenured professor of Integrated Fisheries Management at the Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin in a joint appointment with the IGB, which he still holds today.

The 44-year-old is the editor of the leading scientific journal for fisheries science - Fish and Fisheries - and in his 20-year scientific career has already produced 550 publications on the sustainability of recreational fishing, including around 250 articles in peer-reviewed journals and several monographs, including the popular science book "The Underestimated Angler" (Kosmos), which is unfortunately out of print.

Robert Arlinghaus received his first award for science communication in 2004 with the Bscher Media Award of the Humboldt University Society, followed by another one in 2018 by the American Fisheries Society. He has received several renowned awards for his scientific work, most recently the Cultura Award in 2016 for outstanding contributions to the sustainability of land use.

Robert Arlinghaus is father of two children (7 and 5 years) and lives with his family in Karlshorst in Berlin. In his free time he goes mainly – angling.

Information about the working group around Robert Arlinghaus: www.ifishman.de

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ifishman.science/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/RArlinghausFish>