

## African Graduate Student Fund Committee

**Committee Members:** Risky Agwanda, Jesse Alston, Bruce Buttler, Adam Ferguson, Jacob Goheen, Anne-Marie Hodge, Prince Kaleme, Monica Lasky, Alicia Linzey, Molly McDonough, Patricia Moehlman, Ryan Norris, Link Olson (Chair), Safian Rabiou, Chloé Warret Rodrigues, Robert Rose, Duane Schlitter, Matthew Snider, and Sydney Stephens

### **Mission:**

The African Graduate Student Research Fund committee grants awards to African nationals pursuing graduate degrees in the form of \$1,500 grants and online membership in the American Society of Mammalogists. Eligible students must be citizens of African countries and currently enrolled in a degree-granting graduate program.

### **Information Items:**

(1) In 2020, the Committee awarded grants to the following five recipients. **Valorian Douatsop** (MS student, University of Dschang, Cameroon), **Charles Emogor** (PhD student, University of Cambridge, United Kingdom), **Clinton Factheu** (PhD student, University of Yaoundé I, Cameroon), **Zabibu Kabalika** (PhD student, University of Glasgow, United Kingdom), and **Aristide Sock Bell, Jr.** (University of Douala, Cameroon). **Ashleigh Donaldson** (PhD student, University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa) and **Boris Otchika** (PhD student, Masuku University of Science and Technology, Gabon) were recognized with Honorable Mention. More information about each recipient's research can be found on our web page.

(2) In 2021, we received a record 63 eligible applications from citizens of 16 African countries enrolled in 41 institutions spanning 20 countries and 4 continents.

(3) Monica Lasky (MS student, Colorado State University) joined the committee in 2020. No members left the committee.

(4) As of 31 December 2020, the fund balance stood at \$93,666 and the rolling three-year average of the 4.5% interest was \$4,215, enough to sustain two \$1,500 awards annually from the fund's interest. Twelve donations totaling \$10,726.30 were received in 2020; three of these—each in the amount of \$1,500—were directed by the donors (including Robert Rose and an anonymous donor) to be used to fund 2020 awards, and a fourth in the amount of \$3,000 was specified for use in funding two awards in 2021. Individual Committee members also donated funds to pay for online student memberships in ASM, per our Committee's mission.

(5) Jim and Carol Patton generously donated \$12,500 to the African Graduate Student Research Fund in January 2021. In consultation with ASM Secretary-Treasurer Matt Hopton, *the Committee has determined that an additional \$11,050 in donations by 31 December 2021 would bring the fund's balance to \$100,000 and the three-year rolling average to \$4,635, enough to fund three awards in 2022.* The Committee has committed to raising this amount by the end of 2021.

(6) Multiple conversations among Committee members suggested sufficient interest in shortening the Committee’s name (the longest of any ASM committee) to warrant a vote, and an online poll was conducted in March 2020. Eighteen respondents voted for one of four options. Eleven (61%) voted for a change to “African Research Fellowship,” five (31%) voted for “African Fellowship”, two (11%) voted to discuss the matter more as a committee but indicated no strong objection to a name change, and none voted to retain the current name without any discussion.

### **Action Items:**

(1) The Committee seeks board approval to make **three** \$1,500 awards and **three** \$25 online student memberships for 2022 from the endowment, for a total request of \$4,575. This is contingent on the Committee’s ability to raise an additional \$11,050 in donations by 31 December 2021 (see Information Items 4 and 5), which would bring the three-year rolling average to \$4,635.

(2) The Committee seeks board approval to change our name to the “African Research Fellowship Committee” (see Information Item 7), with the awards hereafter referred to as “African Research Fellowships.” We follow *U.S. News & World Report*’s<sup>1</sup> contemporary definition of “fellowship” as “a monetary award given to a scholar to pay for his or her academic pursuits.”

(3) Along with the International Relations, Conservation, and Human Diversity Committees, our committee is co-sponsoring the effort to organize a symposium entitled, “Recent advances in the conservation of African mammals,” to be held at the 2023 meetings. Please see addendum for updates to this action item, which has been carried over from last year and represents advance notice of a budget request to be included in next year’s annual report.

The Committee thanks ASM’s leaders and members for successfully navigating a very challenging 2020 and 2021.

**Respectfully submitted,**

Link E. Olson, Chair

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<sup>1</sup>Kowarski, I. 2019. What a fellowship is and why you might want one. *U.S. News & World Report*, online. <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-graduate-schools/paying/articles/what-a-fellowship-is-and-why-you-might-want-one>

### **Addendum** (prepared by J. Goheen)

Our symposium proposal “Recent Advances in the Conservation of African Mammals” was to be held during the 2021 ASM/IMC meeting in Anchorage, Alaska. Due to the cancellation of this meeting, we are now anticipating that this symposium will be held in 2023. Funds have been raised to fully defray expenses associated with hosting four speakers, all of whom have confirmed their availability for the 2023 meeting.

- (1) Abdullahi Hussein Ali, Hirola Conservation Programme, Kenya
- (2) Dominique Goncalves, Elephant Ecology Project, Gorongosa National Park, Mozambique
- (3) Thandiwe Mweetwa, Zambian Conservation Programme, Zambia
- (4) Fidisoa Rasambainarivo, Madagascar Flora and Fauna Group, Madagascar

We envision a special feature, “Recent advances in the conservation of African mammals,” to which symposium participants would be encouraged to submit pieces for publication in the *Journal of Mammalogy*.

Additionally, the local organizing committee for the ASM/IMC joint meeting agrees that Africa is underrepresented and deserving of support for such a meeting. There is potential for the IFM Board to defray expenses associated with one or more plenary (senior) speakers who have dedicated their careers to the conservation of African mammals. This request from the IFM Board is pending, so speakers have not yet been invited. Potential plenary speakers include:

- (1) Dr. Sarah Durant, Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society of London
- (2) Dr. Paula Kahumbu, Wildlife Direct
- (3) Dr. Margaret Kinnaird, World Wildlife Fund
- (4) Dr. David MacDonald, Wildlife Conservation Research Unit, University of Oxford
- (5) Dr. David Mallon, IUCN Antelope Specialist Group, Manchester Metropolitan University
- (6) Mr. Martin Mulama, World Wildlife Fund

To date, we have raised ca. \$24,000 to fully defray expenses associated with the four speakers. Financial support has been generously provided by the World Wildlife Fund and private donors. Additionally, and through action items in annual reports, our committees are jointly requesting \$9,000 from the ASM Board of Directors for the 2023 meetings, as was supported through a straw poll at the 2019 Board meeting in Washington, DC. We anticipate that these remaining funds will be used as travel awards for 4-5 African mammalogists.

This symposium is jointly supported by the African Graduate Student Research Fund, Conservation, Human Diversity, and International Relations committees of the ASM. Further details regarding the motivation for this symposium can be found on the application, submitted in April 2020.