

Public Education Committee

Committee Members: S. Chavda, R. Green, W. Ingle, V. Mathis (co-chair), S. Mech (co-chair), M. Merrick, V. Naples, D. K. Odell, J. R. O'Neill-Englund, P. Owen, L. Schlitter, S. Sheffield, E. Siracusa, M. Swanson, L. Walsh, A. M. Wurth, C. Yahnke.

Mission:

Established as a standing committee by the Board of Directors in 1993, and the mission statement revised in 2009, the Public Education Committee seeks to make information about mammals accessible to grades K-12 in formal education settings and to everyone in informal settings. Committee members foster outreach projects in our Society to raise awareness of mammals for children and adults. The Committee coordinates its efforts with the assistance of other ASM committees, sister societies, informal public educational organizations, as well as elementary, middle, and high school science teachers.

Responsibilities:

The Public Education Committee conducts several activities including the Public Education Partnership (PEP) that is an initiative to encourage activity and visibility of ASM members in their local K-12 classrooms. This initiative was launched at the 1995 Annual Meeting at the University of Vermont with 64 charter members.

Special Recognition:

We would like to recognize David Huckaby for all his help this past year in helping us improve the Mammal Species Database. Through his efforts making sure the Mammal Image Library, Mammal Species Database, and the MSD were consistent, he alerted the PEC to many inconsistencies, missing taxa, and out of date taxonomy in the MSD that we have strived to correct. Without his efforts, many of those issues would have likely gone unnoticed. Thank you, David! We truly appreciate the effort and hard work you put in.

We would also like to thank Sean Maher for his continued help in keeping the MSD running online and helping us make corrections.

Information Items:

(1) Mammal Species Database:

We worked this past year to update taxonomy to be consistent with the Mammal Diversity Database and Mammal Image Library, correct any errors, and add in missing taxa. This will be an on-going effort.

Not all fields in the database are active: Zoonotic Disease and Citizen Scientist Projects are placeholders within the database structure and we hope to start filling those information areas now that the taxonomy has been updated. For Zoonotic Disease, S. Chavda is interested in

working on populating this field in the database and will start working on that soon. For more information about the Citizen Scientist Clearinghouse, please see information item 4.

Future plans will incorporate Canada and then Mexico.

Our long-term goal is to eventually incorporate the mammal species of Central and South America.

(2) Science Fair Certificates:

The Public Education Committee provides recognition to students participating in Science Fairs with a project related to mammals by awarding a Certificate of Achievement. Blue Ridge Highlands Regional Science Fair awarded one participant our certificate this year. We would like to remind the membership to request the Certificate of Achievement if you participate as a judge or an organizer in a science fair, to present to any student who conducts research on mammals. Please email one of the co-Chairs for the certificate template.

(3) Clearinghouse for K-12 Teachers:

We would like to create a more useful clearinghouse of information on the ASM website, where we can have a place for “Ask a Mammalogist”, which could be a database where people can submit their questions and hopefully members of ASM with that particular expertise could answer them. This will be coordinated by E. Siracusa and D. Odell. This could also be a place for workshops and kits that we would loan out to teachers. The latter is under further development of ideas by L. Schlitter and W. Ingle. We also want to have information for teachers, such as lesson plans and citizen science projects they can connect to. P. Owen is developing an action plan on how to best move forward with the education portion of the clearinghouse.

(4) Citizen Scientist Projects:

We are making plans to move forward with potential citizen science collaborations, including informational literature and connecting with other databases. S. Mech has begun conversations with iNaturalist to formalize an agreement to use our species lists and increase ASM’s presence on the site. This will require coordination with the Mammal Diversity Committee and, potentially, the Informatics Committee. We will also establish an ASM PEC account on iNaturalist to build and maintain state-by-state mammal guidebooks based on the mammal species database. We hope to have the first several states completed by the 2019 meeting in Washington, DC.

C. Yahnke is working on a citizen science project analyzing bat calls for Wisconsin that we hope to expand nationally. This project could include development of a georeferenced bat call database, but we hope to be able to leverage our work with iNaturalist to accomplish this.

Action Items: None.

Respectfully submitted,

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