

## **Public Education Committee**

**Committee Members:** G. Feldhamer, D. Ginnett, A. Joachim, R. Larsen, M. Merrick, D. K. Odell, J O'Neill, B. D. Sasse, B. Shaw (Chair), S. Sheffield, K. K. Thorington, and M. Wolf

### **Mission:**

Established as a standing committee by the Board of Directors in 1993, the Public Education Committee seeks to make education about mammals accessible to grades K-12. Committee members foster outreach projects to raise awareness about mammals for students in their formative years. The committee coordinates its efforts with the assistance of other ASM committees, sister societies as well as elementary 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.

### **Information Items:**

(1) State Lists of Mammals: One of the PEC's long-term projects is to provide State Lists of Mammals for all 50 states. Mammal Species of the World: A Taxonomic and Geographic Reference (3rd ed; MSW) was published in 2005, and the state mammal lists are aligned to this taxonomic system. Members of PEC completed 25 State Mammal Lists prior to 2005. In addition, 4 states were completed with information before 2005 and therefore, were not posted online. None of these state lists have been updated with the 2005 MSW, and therefore, all states need either writing or revising to reflect those changes. At the 2009 Annual Meeting in Fairbanks, Alaska, the Committee determined that the most reasonable course of action was to completely revise the way state lists are written. In place of the individual documents, we are developing a single database of all species found within the United States. Once the database of species has been compiled, the individual state lists can be built by simply selecting the state field for the mammals found there. We set a three-year deadline, with the completion of the database set for the ASM meeting in 2012.

There are multiple benefits to this system.

- With the completion of the database, all 50 states are essentially completed.
- When the Mammal Species of the World: A Taxonomic and Geographic Reference is revised to the 4<sup>th</sup> edition, it will be a matter of making the appropriate species changes in the database (one time rather than 50 times for each state), and the list will be current within a matter of weeks (rather than years) after publication.
- The new ASM internet website can support a searchable database system. In that case, mammal species of the United States can become a flexible tool for searching not only state mammal lists, but also individual species, genera, or families throughout the United States. This becomes a powerful tool for further PEC projects and programs.

We have completed the following Orders: Artiodactyla, Carnivora (A. Joakim), Chiroptera (R. Larsen), Didelphimorphia, Cingulata, Perissodactyla, and Sirenia (B. Shaw); and the families Sciuridae (M. Merrick), Aplodontiidae, Erethizontidae, Myocastoridae, Castoridae (B. Shaw) in Rodentia, the family Ochotonidae in Lagomorpha.

We are targeting the completion of the following groups by this time next year: Order Cetacea, Rodentia families Geomyidae, Heteromyidae, Cricetidae, Muridae; Lagomorpha family Leporidae; and Soricomorpha family Talpidae. Soricidae has been assigned, but not completed. We are asking for anyone interested in helping us prepare the North American mammal groups to please contact B. Shaw (email on the ASM website). We especially need someone familiar with Cetacea to work on that group.

(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. Three certificates were requested this year. We would like to remind the membership to request the Certificate of Achievement if you participate in a science fair, for any student who conducts research on mammals. Please email the chair.

(3) Clearinghouse for K-12 Teachers: This program connects classroom teachers with mammalogists but is not used. We had no requests this year. We anticipate that this will change as the PEC is able to utilize the newly upgraded website.

(4) Other Projects: Initial steps have been taken to work with the Conservation Committee to develop resources for K-12 educators, informal educators, and the general public on conservation issues. Now that Phase 1 of the upgrade is completed, we can begin to develop this collaboration for K-12 and the public and the ASM Conservation Committee's projects.

(5) The committee has discussed several projects to engage formal educators, informal educators, and the public in general, but we were limited until the new website became available.

**Action Items:**

(1) In coordination with the Informatics Committee, we respectfully request a budget of \$5,000 for fiscal year 2012 to incorporate a searchable database system into Phase 2 of the website upgrades.

**Respectfully submitted,**

Barbara J. Shaw, Chair

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