

Public Education Committee

Committee Members: L. C. Arias, K. Bell, G. Feldhamer, D. Ginnett, V. Mathis, M. Merrick, D. K. Odell, J. R. O'Neill, P. Owen, V. Naples, L. Schlitter, B. J. Shaw (Chair), S. Sheffield, K. K. Thorington, and J. Varner.

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.

Information Items:

(1) Special Recognition: Jennifer O'Neill

We would like to recognize Jennifer O'Neill for her extraordinary work on behalf of ASM's Public Education Committee over the past 24 months. She reviewed each mammal species organized by Order and/or Family in Excel worksheets and compared it to the 2005 Mammal Species of the World before these data were imported into the ASM Mammal Species Database. After the database was populated, each of the 50 states was exported to Excel spreadsheets. She verified each state mammal list, making necessary edits and confirming any questions with DeeAnn Reeder. Thank you, Jenny.

(2) State Lists of Mammals:

(A. Joachim (deceased), M. Merrick, D. K. Odell, J. R. O'Neill, B. J. Shaw, and K. K. Thorington)

Our stated goal for 2014-15 was to go live with the Mammal Species Database. As of writing this report, we are in the final stages of development, and we anticipate that the database will be live by the time of our meeting in June 2015. We truly appreciate the extraordinary help and guidance of the Informatics Committee, especially the current Chair, Sean Mather, and former Chair, Matt Hopton. Thank you.

Not all fields in the database are active: Zoonotic Disease and Citizen Scientist Projects are placeholders within the database structure. For Zoonotic Disease, we need someone who works in this area and is willing to populate and maintain this field in the database to volunteer on our Committee. For the Citizen Scientist Projects field, Katherine Thorington is developing a way to use this as a Citizen Scientist Clearinghouse on mammals. For more information about the Citizen Scientist Clearinghouse, please see information item 4.

After the ASM Mammal Species Database is live, we request that all membership review it. Please send any omissions, errors, or corrections to the PEC Chair.

Our next two goals are to: 1) develop a voluntary survey to assess students and teachers on the ease of using the database and 2) incorporate the mammal species of Canada into the database. We anticipate completion of this phase by 2016 and 2017 respectively. Our long-term goals are to incorporate Mexico's mammal species, and eventually the mammal species of Central and South America.

(3) 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 six participants our certificates. 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 the Chair for the certificate template.

(4) Clearinghouse for K-12 Teachers:

(P. Owen, B.J. Shaw)

This program connects classroom teachers with mammalogists. This year, we had one request for a mammalogist to visit with a 3rd grade classroom in Alberta, Canada. We are currently setting up a video conference with this classroom, and the visit will take place during May.

(5) Citizen Scientist Projects:

(K.K. Thorington (lead), J. Varner)

One of the challenges of education through modern technology is how to get folks off the computer and exploring the natural world. At the 2013 Annual Meeting, K.K. Thorington, J. Varner, and B. Shaw developed and presented a poster to engage ASM Membership in this discussion about how we can promote science to everyone, primarily through citizen scientist projects. In general, members indicated that PEC could act as a clearinghouse for citizen scientist projects throughout North America. This would provide one place for the public looking to participate in mammal projects, and in turn increase traffic to the ASM website. We now have a way to incorporate this information in the online database system.

(6) Teacher Workshop

(G. Feldhamer (lead), V. Mathis, P. Owen, L. Schlitter, B. J. Shaw, J. Varner)

PEC piloted the K-5 teacher workshop Tracking Mammals for Elementary Teachers (developed by Joachim (deceased), Owen, Schlitter, and Shaw), and the MS/HS workshop Population Dynamics for Middle School/High School Teachers (developed by Feldhamer, Mathis, and Varner) last year in Oklahoma City at the Sam Noble Museum of Natural History. This year, we are incorporating the Next Generation of Science Standards (NGSS) to the lessons, and developing an evaluation for the teachers to complete at the end of the workshop. We are presenting a 7 hour teacher workshop at the Museum of Science and History (MOSH) on 11 June 2015. Feldhamer is presenting the Middle School/High School (MS/HS) session on field sampling using yellow taxicabs and green pick-up trucks, then incorporating mathematical programming for data analysis. Schlitter and Shaw are presenting the elementary session on mammal detectives – using clues to identify mammals. We realize that not every state has adopted the NGSS. If our host state does not use the NGSS, we will align the activities to the standards of that state.

At the time of this report, we are beginning discussions with Sharon Jansa, host of next year's Annual Meeting in Minneapolis, MN, to hold our third teacher workshop at the Bell Museum of Natural History.

(7) Conservation Education:

With the extensive work required for developing the online mammal species database almost complete, we can turn our attention to some of the other projects that we deem important to public education. Our goal for the 2015-16 year is to collaborate with the Conservation Committee to provide teachers ideas and projects that they can incorporate into their classroom on conservation issues of import to mammals.

Action Items:

(1) In preparation for the teacher workshop in 2016 at the Bell Museum of Natural History, the Public Education Committee requests funds to develop and purchase the materials for presentation and make copies of the curricula (\$300) to deliver the ASM educator workshops to teachers at the University of Minnesota's Bell Museum of Natural Science. We therefore respectfully request a \$300.00 budget to cover these costs. We expect to develop a "workshop kit" that will provide the non-consumable supplies needed to present the K-5 workshop materials. Any funds not used this year will begin to build it (i.e. skeletons, skins, and skulls).

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara J. Shaw, Chair

(Barbara.Shaw@colostate.edu or sciencea2z@yahoo.com)