

Conservation Committee

Committee Members: A. A. Ahlers, L. C. Arias, B. S. Arbogast, B. J. Bergstrom (Chair), A. Cheeseman, A. D. Davidson, N. Dawson, A. W. Ferguson, A. T. Ford, B. J. Gaston, A. J. Giordano, R. L. Honeycutt, T. J. Jessen, D. M. Kaufman, J. Malaney, R. A. Medellin, A. Morzillo, R. A. Ojeda, L. A. Randa, M. Schadler, S. R. Sheffield, N. Upham.

Mission:

The Conservation Committee (CC) was established by the ASM in 1927, a few years after the Society passed a resolution condemning the unscientific and propagandistic extermination campaign against predators at its 4th annual meeting in 1924. First known as the Conservation of Land Mammals Committee, the committee's name was changed to the Conservation Committee in 2002 to reflect the fact that it dealt with conservation issues that included all mammals. In 2002–2003, the Aldo Leopold Conservation Award subcommittee that CC had recently established was moved to full standing committee status. The CC promotes research, education, and science-based solutions to conservation and management of native mammals in North America and globally.

Information Items:

(1) Wendy Tubbs and Erin Posthumus rotated off the Committee this year, and we thank them for their service.

(2) Activities of the ASM CC during 2013-2014:

(a) The CC sponsored a special thematic session on Mammalian Predator Control at the June 2013 ASM conference in Philadelphia.

(b) In concert with the Program Committee and President Heske, CC members discussed potential topics and speakers for a special thematic session on case studies in mammalian conservation at this year's annual conference in Oklahoma City.

(c) CC member Nate Upham presented the Committee with a proposed Symposium on endangered Caribbean mammals for the 2015 meetings in Jacksonville; Committee members discussed and helped revise the proposal, and the Committee voted to endorse it, before it was submitted to the Program Committee for approval:

(d) CC consulted with the refuge manager at Crocodile Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Key Largo, FL, on a "cats indoors" informational brochure that he was producing. This refuge is one of the two last strongholds of the critically endangered Key Largo woodrat, for which stray and feral cats are a major threat.

(e) CC Chair and other members continued to conduct press interviews with reporters covering an ongoing Office of Inspector General's review of USDA Wildlife Services programs, and the

continuing controversy about USFWS peer review process for their proposed delisting of the gray wolf (see below).

(f) In December 2013, CC prepared a Society position letter to the USFWS opposing the proposed taxonomic revision and delisting of the Eastern Gray Wolf, opposing the delisting of the Northern Rocky Mountain Gray Wolf in all areas where it is not already delisted, and supporting recognition of subspecific status of the Mexican Gray Wolf but critiquing the recovery process and designation of critical habitat for that rare subspecies. The letter can be read here:

http://www.mammalsociety.org/uploads/committee_files/ASM2013WolfDelistingLetterRevision15Dec.pdf

Later that same month, we co-drafted a letter with the Society for Conservation Biology (SCB) detailing our mutual concerns about the inadequacies of the recovery plan for the Mexican Gray Wolf; that letter can be read here:

http://www.mammalsociety.org/uploads/committee_files/SCB-ASM2013CommentsOnWolfRulesDec16.pdf

(g) After a controversial suspension of the initial independent peer review panel of the wolf delisting rule in 2013, USFWS admitted its process was flawed and announced plans to convene a new peer review panel; that panel, organized by the National Center for Ecological Analysis, concluded early in 2014 that the USFWS did not use the best available science in reaching its decision to revise the taxonomy of and delist the Eastern Wolf and thus, USFWS re-opened the public comment period. CC/ASM revised and resubmitted its position letter in late April to reflect this new information (Check the Committee web page for this letter as well: coming soon).

Action Items: None.

Respectfully submitted,
Brad Bergstrom, Chair
(bergstrm@valdosta.edu)