

Public Education Committee

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

Information Items:

(1) K-12 Outreach PowerPoint:

Steve Sheffield and Pam Owens are working on a PowerPoint presentation on ecological importance of large carnivores. Meant for K-12 education, it focuses on eight of the large carnivores in North America, covering ecological services, scavenging, ecological impacts, benefits, and importance, etc. We still need an accompanying white paper for any unknown technical terms. Steve is having issues getting photos that can be used. Once completed, we need to determine the best method for disseminating the resource (e.g., webpage, an ASM article, various list-serves, teacher groups, etc.).

(2) Mammal Species List

More progress was made this past year updating the Species List to match the taxonomy of the Mammal Image Library and the Mammal Diversity Database. We began handling non-natives and marine mammals as well, in an effort to clarify those groups and make them consistent across the state lists.

(3) Zoonotics

Snehal Chavda created a list of zoonotics and reverse zoonotics (diseases transmitted from humans to wildlife). While adding the zoonotics into the State Species List is not feasible at this point, the best way to utilize the information is being discussed. The information has potential as a white paper/position paper on our current understanding of zoonoses and reverse zoonoses.

(4) Resolution

John Yunger and Snehal will work to create a resolution about increasing/raising awareness of public education on the need for fieldwork experience at the grade school/high school age. Tom Tomasi and Doug Kelt were supportive.

(5) Bio Blitz

Snehal proposed to have the PEC host a BioBlitz during future ASM meetings. Maybe just for 2 hours. Advertisement may be covered at the local level for free. We can tie it into the ASM iNaturalist and create a check list for the BioBlitz. For future meetings, we can create a city or county mammal list for host cities. We can also create iNaturalist city-specific or county-specific guides that people can download to avoid paper waste. We will continue to explore ways to implement this plan.

(6) iNaturalist

Steve is developing state mammal guidebooks on iNaturalist. We have developed instructions to download our state database as an Excel file and then upload it into iNaturalist using the ASM-PEC account. Pennsylvania is complete, but we want to roll out the other states into iNaturalist.

(7) Ask a Mammalogist/Interview a mammalogist

Rebecca Green has the idea of setting up interviews between students and ASM members. Part of the interview done by college age student about what they do in mammalogy. The other half interview with kids, either classroom group or individual. Short, 30 seconds to 2 minutes, interviews would be ideal. This could also highlight diversity in the sciences including underrepresented groups in ASM. Maybe set up a recording session between established mammalogist and a new student member.

(8) Science Fair Certificates

The PEC 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 two participants 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.

(9) Future workshops

We have discussed the possibility of hosting a “workshop” modeled after the Society for the Preservation of Natural History Collections’ Share Fair, where meeting attendees bring public outreach activities that they have developed for demo and sharing. This would be a great way for mammalogists to share their K-12 outreach and for other attendees to get ideas on how they can adapt and use those activities in their communities. Possibly something to be developed for ASM 2022.

Action Items: None.

Respectfully submitted,

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