

Resolutions Committee

Committee Membership: A. W. Ferguson, D. Gonzalez, J. Lombardi, S. G. Mech, S. R. Sheffield (Chair), D. W. Sparks, J. A. Yunger.

Mission:

The Resolutions Committee of the American Society of Mammalogists (ASM) was established in 1956 to provide a mechanism for the Society to share relevant science and express views on issues that involve mammals. The Resolutions Committee also writes the Host Resolution for the Annual Meeting of the ASM.

Functioning:

As part of the Resolution Committee's Mission, proposals are first reviewed internally by Committee members, then revised as needed in consultation with the proposer. Resolutions deemed appropriate and ready for further consideration are vetted with the President. Upon approval, resolutions will be circulated to the ASM membership. Resolutions represent objective assessments of facts as they pertain to issues of relevance to mammals and mammalogy, and that they adhere to the highest scientific and ethical standards. Consequently, resolutions frequently require multiple drafts, supporting literature, and input from the Society; as a result, they rarely involve a rapid development.

Action Items:

(1) Resolution on the need for wildlife trade data to aid wild mammal populations and protect against diseases/pandemics

Background: During a time widely recognized by scientists as a 6th mass extinction event, one specific type of hunting, trophy hunting, poses a particularly insidious and cruel threat to large mammalian populations worldwide. In addition, we are in the midst of a pandemic of likely zoonotic origin. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's LEMIS database is used by scientists to identify species being threatened with extinction due to exploitation, monitor disease spread and wildlife trade to aid in research on pathogen emergence, study illegal trade and identify trafficking patterns and networks, and study and reduce demand for mammals in the US market, among other uses. Thus, having access to this database is critical for scientists and others. Unfortunately, USFWS has been seriously limiting access to this database since 2014 due to their continued use of an illegitimate exemption of the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). During this time, it was revealed that >700,000 wildlife "trophies" from numerous mammals globally entered the US, but no one had access to this data until Spring 2022.

Intent: request that USFWS put an end to use of an illegitimate exemption (Exemption 4) in FOIA requests, and that all LEMIS data be released to the public at least quarterly (if not each month) through an online portal.

Intended Recipients: U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Director Martha Williams, Chief/Asst Director, Office of Law Enforcement), and Department of the Interior (Secretary Deb Haaland, Asst Secretary for Fish, Wildlife, and Parks Shannon Estenoz).

Discussion on this planned resolution was begun with the Conservation Committee and continues with both Conservation and Marine Mammals Committees.

Respectfully submitted,
Steve Sheffield, Chair
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