

## **Conservation Committee**

**Committee Members:** A. Ali, J. Aliperti, B. Arbogast (Chair), C. Aylward, E. Baerwald, P. Barboza, E. Beever, B. Bergstrom, C. Callahan, G. Ceballos, A. Chavez, J. Cook, M. Cove, E. Davis, N. de la Sancha, M. Dudenhoeffer, M. Dyck, N. Edmison, S. Farr, A. Ferguson, A. Ford, A. Giordano, C. Goblet, J. González-Maya, D. Green, E. Green, R. Green, K. Gutierrez, M. Hawkins, J. Heffelfinger, A-M. Hodge, R. Honeycutt, M. Hughes, R. Jakopak, T. Jezkova, T. Jung, M. Kalcounis-Ruepell, D. Kaufman, T. Knowles, J. Koprowski, A. Krevitz, T. Lacher, N. Lewis-Rogers, H. Lutz, J. Malaney, R. Medellin, M. Merrick, M. Novillo, R. Ojeda, G. Perner, L. Randa, K. Reiss, M. Rentz, C. Warret-Rodrigues, M. Schadler, S. Sheffield, K. Smith, W. Smith, M. Snider, S. Stephens, M. Tewes, N. Upham, E. Wilson.

### **Mission:**

The Conservation Committee (CC) was established by the American Society of Mammalogists (ASM) in 1927, a few years after the Society passed a resolution condemning the unscientific and propagandistic extermination campaign against predators at its 4<sup>th</sup> 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, terrestrial and marine. 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) Activities of the ASM CC from June 2020 to April 2021 included:

(a) The Conservation Committee (and R. L. Honeycutt, in particular) contributed extensively to the drafting a joint letter between American Society of Mammalogists (ASM) and the Society for Conservation Biology North America (SCBNA) that was submitted to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) as official “comments” regarding the Environmental Impact Statement for the *Revision to the Nonessential Experimental Population of the Mexican Wolf* (hereafter “10(j) rule revision”) in June 2020. In the joint letter, ASM and SCBNA argued that the 10(j) rule revision required that the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service must take a fresh look at the best available science regarding what steps were necessary for recovery of the Mexican wolf, rather than relying on the 2017 recovery plan. The letter was jointly signed by SCBNA President Karen Root and ASM President Douglas Kelt. The letter is posted on the ASM’s website at:  
[https://www.mammalsociety.org/uploads/committee\\_files/Joint\\_SCBNA\\_ASM\\_comments\\_10j\\_FINAL\\_6\\_12\\_2020.pdf](https://www.mammalsociety.org/uploads/committee_files/Joint_SCBNA_ASM_comments_10j_FINAL_6_12_2020.pdf)

(b) The Conservation Committee assisted in the drafting of a public comment letter, signed and submitted on behalf of the ASM by the Society’s President, Douglas Kelt, in August 2020, on the proposed rule (50 CFR 424) by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), which proposed to establish a regulatory definition of “habitat” in the context of the designation of critical habitat for listed species, a provision of

Section 4 of the US Endangered Species Act (ESA) as amended (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.). The ASM letter pointed out that the newly proposed definitions of habitat 1) strongly suggest that a recovery plan (for which critical habitat is a vehicle) could not use ecosystem restoration or habitat management in *unoccupied* areas in order to make those areas suitable to aid in the recovery of the species; 2) appeared to exclude known threats to habitat, such as desertification and global climate change, in consideration of threats to taxa; and as such, were counter to all scientific data to date. The letter also provided several mammalian examples highlighting the problematic nature of the new definitions of habitat being proposed by USFWS. The full letter is posted on the ASM's website at:

[https://www.mammalsociety.org/uploads/committee\\_files/ASM%20Comments%20on%20Proposed%20Definition%20of%20Habitat%20for%20the%20ESA.pdf](https://www.mammalsociety.org/uploads/committee_files/ASM%20Comments%20on%20Proposed%20Definition%20of%20Habitat%20for%20the%20ESA.pdf)

(c) Members of the Conservation Committee gave advice to ASM President, Douglas Kelt, on preparation of a Presidential letter to Donald J. Trump (submitted on 28 September, 2020) regarding the Trump Administration's decision to open drilling contracts for the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR). Potential negative impacts of drilling on the Porcupine caribou herd, musk oxen, and polar bears, were highlighted. The full letter is posted on the ASM's website at:[https://www.mammalsociety.org/uploads/committee\\_files/ASM%20Statement%20concerning%20Proposed%20Oil%20and%20Gas%20Exploration%20in%20the%20Arctic%20National%20Wildlife%20Refuge.pdf](https://www.mammalsociety.org/uploads/committee_files/ASM%20Statement%20concerning%20Proposed%20Oil%20and%20Gas%20Exploration%20in%20the%20Arctic%20National%20Wildlife%20Refuge.pdf)

(d) The Conservation Committee embarked on a new effort to produce the "**Regional and Priority Taxa Review: 2020.**" The goal of this report was to provide a summary of some of the main conservation issues facing wild mammals in designated geographic areas and taxonomic groups. The report was not intended to be a comprehensive assessment of the globe or of all taxonomic groups of mammals of conservation concern. Rather, it was designed to provide a baseline snapshot of issues currently or potentially affecting mammals in the designated geographic regions and to provide an update on the status and trends of the designated Priority Taxa. It is envisioned that such an assessment will occur every few years, and that there will likely be changes to the Priority Taxa (especially a gradual expansion of taxonomic groups being assessed). The report has been shared via email with the members of the ASM CC, ASM President Kelt, and ASM President-Elect Lessa.

#### Action Items:

(1) **There are no new action items.** However, the Conservation Committee reiterates its support for the "Recent advances in the conservation of African mammals" Symposium, originally proposed to be held in 2021 at the joint American Society of Mammalogists–International Mammalogical Congress in Anchorage, Alaska. Given that this joint meeting has been re-scheduled for 2023, the Conservation Committee assumes that the Symposium will also be re-scheduled for 2023. As such, the Committee anticipates asking for the ASM Board's support for this Symposium in the Committee's 2022 Annual Report. The original request is summarized below:

“In conjunction with the sponsoring African Graduate Student Research Fund Committee and ASM’s International Relations Committee and the Human Diversity Committee, the Conservation Committee is co-sponsoring the effort to organize a symposium entitled, “Recent advances in the conservation of African mammals” at the 2021 joint American Society of Mammalogists–International Mammalogical Congress in Anchorage, Alaska. This symposium would represent the first effort to increase exposure of meeting attendees to historically-underrepresented geographic regions, and attendance by mammalogists from said regions. With the Board’s support, it is our intent that this symposium would represent the first in a longer-term commitment by the ASM to promote global diversity of mammalogists and mammalogy. A request is being considered for the next ASM budgetary cycle for the ASM Board to consider matching funds for up to \$9000, which the Board of Directors unanimously supported in an informal straw poll at the annual meeting in Washington DC, as reflected in the unabridged minutes from last year’s meeting. Since this time, our committees have raised \$24,000 for this effort. We ask for the Board’s support in dedicating \$9000 to this effort.”

**Respectfully Submitted,**

Brian S. Arbogast, Chair

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