



Latest News on the Fund's Grantees

The Crowder-Messersmith Conservation Fund honors Orville Crowder and Don and Sherry Messersmith, leaders in nature tourism, as a means to further global nature conservation. The Fund support the goals of ANS by helping small, local conservation and education projects in developing countries. It provides seed money to communities and individuals whose projects have not attracted major support from other sources. In 2020 were able to offer 10 grants selected from the 133 submitted. These grantees join those from more than 55 countries that have received awards since 1975.

As the global challenges brought by the COVID-19 pandemic continue into another grant year, we are working closely with our grantees to ensure they can receive their funding and have additional time as needed to complete their projects. The direct and varied impacts of COVID-19 are illustrated in 2021 grants to organizations in Madagascar and Kenya.

2020 Grantees:

Work continues to move forward on a conservation program at Dehing-Patkai Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam, **India** to protect the endangered White-winged Wood Duck.

Community-based conservation outreach is underway for the protection of threatened amphibian and reptile populations of Gashaka Gumti National Park in **Nigeria**.



Cape Verde - Students showing cartoon ecosystem parts.

Although some programming was impacted by Covid restrictions, community-based conservation of endemic bird species in Maio, **Cape Verde** was successfully completed.

With the project start date pushed forward, conservation of the largest frog on earth, the Goliath frog, in **Cameroon** is underway with outreach in local communities and field work.

Women for Conservation in **Nepal** engaged with their local community on a variety of educational and conservation projects in protection of the endangered Fishing Cat and their aquatic habitat. They were also able to share results with other groups in the Fishing Cat Conservation Alliance.



Nepal - Working to save the Fishing Cat

The projects to raise awareness of the vulnerable Blue Swallow at Ruma National Park in **Kenya** has been delayed due to the pandemic but is still moving forward when able.

Green Governance **Nepal** was unable to receive funds until late 2020; their project for responsible forest management focusing on the endangered East Himalayan Yew, is ongoing.

In **Uganda** community members became effective environmental stewards of a critically endangered member of the Cycad family through micro-propagation methods.

Women's Conservation in **Colombia** continues their project to train local women in the study of the Gorgeted Puffleg, an endemic hummingbird, and to identify and protect their habitat. (Sara Ines Lara, the project coordinator, spoke at our 2020 C-M Annual talk, by Zoom).

With its importance as an income source to the community, in **Tanzania** promotion of sustainable management of the endangered Manyara tilapia is underway.

2021 Grantees:

The Bay Islands Conservation Association's project in **Honduras** will focus on iguana conservation, particularly the critically endangered Utila Spiny-tailed Iguana, as well as on the appreciation of local biodiversity of Utila Island. The project will work with a local school education program and will include extracurricular field trips and outreach events focused on the iguana. In addition, community meetings and events will create island unity toward conservation goals of converting the Spiny-tailed Iguana into a flagship species for biodiversity conservation

Creating a youth environmental leadership program protecting targeted mammals in the Kasungu National Park area of **Malawi**, 160 selected youth will be part of the project to "train-the-trainers" to work with community schools and conduct an awareness campaign focusing on areas that are hotspots for poaching of endangered lions, elephants, rhinos, and pangolins. Media will be included in the plan to promote community awareness.

The GeoEnvironment and Biodiversity Conservation's project in **Benin** will launch a census recruiting local community members to assess the distribution and abundance of the endangered Red-bellied Monkey, enhance community awareness and research the possibility of primate-based ecotourism as a means of generating revenue for the community. An ambitious teacher, student, and local community education program will increase conservation awareness.

Rwenzori Conservation Trust in **Uganda** is working for the protection of an endangered Cycad species, threatened by non-sustainable practices such as seasonal burning. Conservation awareness will be fostered through meetings and projects with stakeholders, and training will be provided for plant propagation and establishing nurseries.

In **Liberia**, Network Nature will use a multi-stakeholder approach to develop a conservation plan to protect the vulnerable West African Dwarf Crocodile and their ecosystems, threatened by agricultural encroachment, illegal logging and mining, and use as bush meat. Local groups will be recruited for regular monitoring and to present multi-media programming designed to engage the community in conservation awareness.

Bahir Dar University in **Ethiopia** has developed a project to engage the community in the sustainable management of Cyprus papyrus, and in turn, the region's threatened wetlands through community meetings and education that will produce bylaws and regulations, instilling a sense of ownership among community members.

As a direct result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mikajy Natiora Association in **Madagascar** is working to mitigate pressures on biodiversity and threats to endangered lemur species due to lockdowns preventing vital resources from reaching remote regions and the closure of National Parks leading to habitat destruction. Training as forest patrols and guides is planned for community members to bring alternative livelihoods to the communities and to sponsor education and outreach activities for all ages.

The Kole Women's Association in **Uganda** seeks to promote community-based conservation of Uganda's national bird, the endangered Grey Crowned Crane. The group plans to develop an educational and custodial program where community members will care for vulnerable cranes in areas adjacent to breeding sites, giving local people the opportunity to engage in alternative livelihoods while positively impacting crane survival.



Colombia – Program participant with Women for Conservation

In **Nepal**, the Himalayan Biodiversity Network undertakes the need to conserve the endangered Himalayan Musk Deer, a vital species in the alpine ecosystem, as it faces increasing threats from poaching and the demand for musk on the black market. The study site focuses on villages along the illegal wildlife trade routes, where forest user groups and community members will form conservation groups. In addition, 20 schools will receive musk deer conservation education which will try to dissuade young people from involvement with the trade.

Angaza Vijij, a community group in coastal **Kenya** proposes a conservation program to protect bats and their habitats, a species often overlooked with focus on African megafauna. With persecution of the species increasing through misinformation connecting bats to COVID-19, the objective is to establish community-led roost sanctuaries, targeting sites used by the endangered Hildegard's Tomb Bat through educational programs and workshops with the goal of showcasing the roosts as educational and eco-tourism sites.

Audubon Naturalist Society's Crowder-Messersmith Conservation Fund Annual Talk:

The Effort to Save the World's Smallest Aquarium, Vieques Island, Puerto Rico, Thursday, November 4 at 7pm (presented via Zoom). Introduction by Don Messersmith.

Destroyed by Hurricane Maria, this Marine Life Exhibit was rebuilt thanks to the efforts of the staff and members of the Vieques Conservation and Historical Trust (VCHT) and the Crowder-Messersmith Fund.

Mark P. Martin Bras, the Director of Community Relations & Field Research at the Vieques Conservation & Historical Trust, will talk about the important role the smallest aquarium plays in educating islanders and visitors about marine conservation. The Aquarium is an innovative educational aquarium that involves students and community members in the capture and release of organisms, rehabilitation of species and the development of prototypes for mangrove reforestation. He will also discuss other conservation efforts on Vieques. The Trust works to conserve the magical natural resources on this small Caribbean Island, with a special focus on the brightest bioluminescent bay in the world.

Mr. Martin Bras works on scientific research and citizen science, bridging the gap between science and community while passionately educating the youth on the EPA- award winning, experiential MANTA Environmental Education Program. He recently presented at the ASLO Planet Water conference, is part of the United Nations Western Tropical Atlantic Decade of Planning group and was the EPA's Environmental Champion in 2017.



Vieques - Dr. Martin Bras educating youth

REGISTER through this link to ANS Nature online programming on the Crowder-Messersmith page:

<https://forms.office.com/r/zMUQbMyPPx>

Confirmations for program registrations will arrive by email and include Zoom login information.