RESEARCH HIGHLIGHTS

Smithsonian Institution

JANUARY 2020

SCHOLARLY STUDIES AWARDS IN FISCAL YEAR 2020 SUPPORT 35 DIVERSE RESEARCH PROJECTS

In November 2019, **the Office of the Provost** announced the recipients of the fiscal year 2020 Scholarly Studies Awards. This internal grants program (approximately $1.7M) is available to Smithsonian staff in all disciplines, with a maximum $75,000 one-year award drawn from Trust and Endowment funding.

A group of confidential Smithsonian peer scholars reviewed, rated, and ranked the 119 proposals received. A total of 35 awards were made to Smithsonian investigators or investigator teams.

The internal program supports a variety of research endeavors. For example: *How Will the Woody Productivity of Forests Worldwide Respond to Climate Change?,* a project proposed by Kristina Anderson Teixeira and Sean McMahon who have joint appointments at the **Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute** and **Conservation Biology Institute**/**Environmental Research Center**; *Analysis and Imaging of the Great Mongol Shahnama*, research proposed by Matthew Clark and Emily Jacobson of the **Freer|Sackler**; and a research, exhibition, and publication project, *Africa Pops: Global Consumer Culture and African Art*, proposed by Kevin Dumouchelle from the **National Museum of African Art**.

First Jaguar in Panama Fitted with GPS Transmitter

Catch a jaguar if you can! After years of catching jaguars only in camera-trap images, Ricardo Moreno, **Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute** research associate and National Geographic Emerging Explorer, and a team of 20 biologists and community members were able to catch a jaguar. The team fit the animal with a transmitter that will help researchers conserve these majestic cats in the wild.

Moreno, along with scientists from the Yaguará Panama Foundation, announced that a female jaguar called *Chucunaque* is the first jaguar in Panama to carry a GPS tracking collar.

"This is an historic moment for science in Panama," Moreno said. "This is the first time that we have succeeded in placing a GPS collar on a jaguar to track its movements and understand how long it stays in an area. Not only will this help to generate more information about this species, but it will also improve strategies for its conservation."

Chucunaque, named for Panama's longest river, is from Darien Province, where, despite the designation of large areas as national parks and indigenous reserves, tropical forests continue to be cleared for timber and cattle pasture. The largest population of jaguars (*Panthera onca*) in the country lives in this area of the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor connecting high biodiversity regions of Central and South America. GPS monitoring of additional jaguars and environmental education in local communities is part of a strategy to conserve the region's wildlife.

CRITICAL ROLE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE 21ST CENTURY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The third annual meeting of the Global Consortium for the Preservation of Cultural Heritage was co-hosted by Yale University and the Smithsonian on October 21-22, at the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden. Michael Atwood Mason, Director of the **Center for Folklife and Cultural Heritage** ("CFCH"), served on the steering committee.

The preservation of cultural heritage is one of the grand challenges of the contemporary world. The goal of the consortium is to enable the global university, education, and research community to make a transformative contribution to the preservation of cultural heritage, through broad educational programs, major collaborative research initiatives, and effective engagement and advocacy.

This year's meeting put a special emphasis on the discussion of relevant topics of interest to university and museum professionals. The theme–*Museum Communities and Equity*–invited participants to explore a range of issues including investigating the role of diverse communities in determining how their heritage is identified, protected, and managed; understanding the needs of the museum and cultural sectors in Africa; and developing creative engagement between cultural institutions and the communities whose heritage they maintain.

CFCH recently received $1.5 million from Ferring Pharmaceuticals for its Cultural Sustainability Program. Ferring's latest contribution, and the center's largest gift to date, will provide the resources necessary to build long-term infrastructure for the center's Cultural Sustainability Program.

The Cultural Sustainability Program works with communities to design and implement strategies to sustain their languages and cultural heritage. The program seeks to understand and mitigate threats to cultural sustainability; scale the center's impact through partnerships, convene on thought leadership; and transform public understanding about cultural diversity.

SMITHSONIAN'S EMAMMAL JOINS WILDLIFE INSIGHTS CAMERA TRAPPING DATA AND ANALYSIS NETWORK

Camera traps are being used all around the world to understand better how wildlife populations are changing. Since 2012, the eMammal project at the **Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute** has offered an online archive and data management system for researchers and volunteers to study wildlife. Volunteers can set up camera traps (hidden, motion-sensing cameras) to take pictures of mammals and upload them to the cloud-based Smithsonian platform. There, these data are reviewed and studied by scientists and other volunteers to ask critical questions in conservation biology. The program has grown significantly since its inception; the data set now includes over nine million images of mammals from around the world, more than the number of physical specimens for mammals in North America.

Smithsonian's eMammal has now partnered with Wildlife Insights. Wildlife Insights combines field and sensor expertise, cutting-edge technology, and advanced analytics to enable people everywhere to share wildlife data and better manage wildlife populations. Images added to the Wildlife Insights platform can be automatically identified using artificial intelligence. This will save thousands of hours, freeing up more time to analyze and apply insights to conservation.

A close up of a fox from the eMammal Tierschnappschuss Project. In this project, scientists are camera trapping the countryside and backyards around Konstanz, Germany.

"A Museum for the People" Symposium

The **Anacostia Community Museum** and the **Asian Pacific American Center** assembled leaders and scholars from the field for a full-day symposium to discuss the past, present, and future of community museums and community cultural institutions on December 6, 2019.

Fifty years after the historic 1969 gathering of community-based cultural institutions that resulted in the publication of the seminal book, *A Museum for the People*, the symposium was organized to convene colleagues across the Smithsonian and broader museum field for meaningful discussions around efforts at collaborating with communities to document, address, and represent their collective histories, cultures, and contemporary social issues.

"The symposium is an opportunity to discuss best practices, share strategies, and expand collaborations internally and nationally that will lead to new and sustained engagement with communities," said Melanie Adams, Director of the Anacostia Community Museum. "I am particularly pleased to co-host this important event with the Asian Pacific American Center led by my colleague, Lisa Sasaki."

Participants included Smithsonian leadership and other Smithsonian colleagues, museum professionals from across the country, and others with an interest in and commitment to community-based arts and cultural institutions. The event was supported by the **Office of the Provost** via a One Smithsonian Symposia award to promote collaborative research among Smithsonian units.