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Policy News from NSC Alliance

Through the NSC Alliance partnership with the American Institute of Biological Sciences, we are pleased to provide NSC Alliance members with the following public policy update. With proper attribution to NSC Alliance, all material from these reports may be reproduced or forwarded. **We encourage you to share this report with colleagues at your institution. Anyone interested in receiving copies of the NSC Alliance Washington Report may subscribe at [www.NSCAlliance.org](http://www.NSCAlliance.org) -- it's free!**

If you have any questions or require additional information regarding any of the following items, please contact NSC Alliance director of public policy Dr. Robert Gropp at 202-628-1500 x 250 or at [rgropp@aibs.org](mailto:rgropp@aibs.org).

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**NSF Awards \$23 Million for Biodiversity Research**

Twelve research projects funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF) will take multi-pronged approaches to better understanding the generation, maintenance, and loss of biodiversity. The program links functional, genetic, and phylogenetic/taxonomic dimensions of biodiversity.

Many of this year's projects focus on microbes, such as the diversity of microbes in permafrost and the relationships between ants and their gut microflora.

The Dimensions of Biodiversity Program will support \$23 million in research this year. The studies are supported by NSF, the São Paulo Research Foundation, and the National Natural Science Foundation of China.

“This year’s portfolio of projects will accelerate our understanding of biodiversity across disciplines and across scales of time and space,” says Penny Firth, director of NSF’s Division of Environmental Biology. “Through this program, we’re witnessing a transformation in our ability to bridge scientific approaches and perspectives.”

### **New Round of Awards for Digitization of Biodiversity Collections**

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded six grants totaling about \$7.5 million to digitize biodiversity collections. The funding is part of a nationwide effort coordinated by the iDigBio program based at the University of Florida.

This is the fourth round of awards made by NSF to establish new Thematic Collections Networks, groups of institutions organized to focus on a biodiversity “grand challenge.” New funding will be used to study the impacts of the rapid temporal and regional changes taking place in species diversity of North America’s arthropods and mollusks, biodiversity changes in the Appalachians, and impacts of invasive species in the Great Lakes.

Lead principal investigators for the new grants are based at Appalachian State University, the Field Museum of Natural History, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Brigham Young University, the University of Cincinnati, and the University of Vermont & State Agricultural College.

“There are specimens that have been around for 100-200 years, but they are in a drawer or on a shelf somewhere, and it’s hard to know where everything is and how to get the data you need,” said Larry Page, director of iDigBio. “If it’s online, you can touch a button and find in seconds what it might have taken you a lifetime to know was there.”

### **National Academies Report Considers Informal STEM Learning**

A new report from the National Academies of Science summarizes the work of a committee of education experts on how the informal education sector could improve science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) learning.

The workshop was held in February 2014 and brought together more than 100 representatives of the formal, informal, and afterschool education sectors. “STEM Learning Is Everywhere: Engaging Schools and Empowering Teachers to Integrate Formal, Informal, and Afterschool Education to Enhance Teaching and Learning in Grades K-8,” is the summary of that meeting and explores how educators can foster more seamless learning of STEM subjects for students in elementary and middle school.

Access a free copy of the report at [http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record\\_id=18818](http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=18818).

## **Participate in the U.S. Virtual Herbarium Survey**

The 2014 U.S. Virtual Herbarium Survey will close in a few weeks. This survey is designed to assess the progress herbaria in the United States are making towards the goal of making records of all specimens in all U.S. herbaria available online. The information provided by survey participants is used in reports, grant proposals, and articles highlighting a herbarium's need for support or advertising its accomplishments. Participate in the survey at <https://adobeformscentral.com/?f=T3f6G-38BMile3JhS3GvhQ>.

## **Guidance on Applying for a Digitization Grant**

iDigBio has released a white paper to provide guidance to principal investigators who are interested in applying for funding from the Advancing Digitization of Biological Collections program at the National Science Foundation (NSF). The guide was compiled with guidance from NSF program officers and senior iDigBio staff. Read the guide at <https://www.idigbio.org/content/writing-proposal-adbc-program-nsf>.

## **Upcoming Webinar on Small Collections**

SCNet, iDigBio, and SPNHC announce a second webinar series focused on curation, digitization, and management of small natural history collections. The webinars in this series will feature several collections domains and preparation types, including but not limited to paleontology, entomology, vertebrate zoology, and botany, as well as museums that manage several small collections.

Each webinar in the series will include a 20-30 minute presentation by a featured speaker followed by 30-40 minutes of discussion. Meetings are virtual and accessible online at <https://idigbio.adobeconnect.com/scnet>. You may login by selecting "Enter as guest," entering your name, and clicking "Enter Room."

The first webinar in the series will be held on 16 October 2014, from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. EDT. Christy Bills, Invertebrates Collection Manager for the Natural History Museum of Utah will discuss obstacles small entomology collections face, how being small can be an asset, resources for digitization questions, funding resources, the importance and how-to of advocacy, partnerships, and collaboration.

## **NAGPRA Program Trainings**

The Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) Program has announced several upcoming training programs and meetings.

The "NAGPRA Basics" training covers the background of the Act, the consultation and decision-making process, notices, grants, and civil penalties. Both new and veteran NAGPRA

practitioners have found this training to be helpful in their work. The training program will be held on 18 November 2014 in Washington, DC. Registration is free. Seating is limited and available on a first-come, first-served basis. To register, visit [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1SLcuyj27cfP5jKm-D8gHZkrnWg8KSBRtsb9jQrULGxo/viewform?edit\\_requested=true](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1SLcuyj27cfP5jKm-D8gHZkrnWg8KSBRtsb9jQrULGxo/viewform?edit_requested=true).

The National Museum of the American Indian will be hosting a symposium on repatriation on 19 November 2014 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm EST in Washington, DC. For more information, visit, <http://nmai.si.edu/calendar/?trumbaEmbed=date%3D20141119#/?i=7>.

The 53<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the NAGPRA Review Committee will be held on 20-21 November 2014 from 8:30 am to 4:30 pm EST. The meeting agenda will be posted on the National NAGPRA Program website on 20 October 2014. Click here to read the Federal Register notice: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2014-03-12/pdf/2014-05333.pdf>.

If the Review Committee Report to Congress for 2014 is not finalized during the 20-21 November meeting, then the Review Committee will meet via teleconference on 11 December 2014 from 2 pm until approximately 4 pm EST. This meeting will be open to the public. Anyone who desires to attend the teleconference must register in advance at <http://www.nps.gov/nagpra/INDEX.HTM>.

### **Apply for Post-Doc Genome Fellowship**

Applications are now being accepted for the Global Genome Initiative Buck Fellowship. The two-year fellowship includes a 55 percent time commitment to biodiversity genomic research and 45 percent commitment to other Global Genome Initiative related activities.

Fellows must propose to conduct research in-residence at the National Museum of Natural History in Washington, DC for 12 to 24 months. Applicants must have completed or be near completion of a Ph.D. Fellowships begin in February 2015 or later and pay a stipend of \$48,000 per year, plus \$4,000 annually for research or healthcare allowance.

For more information on how to apply, visit <http://www.smithsonianofi.com/blog/2014/10/08/calling-all-gene-genies/>.

### **Student Award for Appreciation of Insect Pests**

Applications are being accepted for an award that recognizes student appreciation for the natural history of insect pests. The winner will receive \$500 for the most interesting and inspiring research paper on an insect that is usually regarded as a pest.

The award is sponsored by the Forest Entomology lab at the University of Florida and by the TREE Foundation in Sarasota, Florida.

For details, please see: <http://www.ambrosiasymbiosis.org/award/>.

### **Nominations Sought for Lawrence Memorial Award**

Nominations of doctoral students who are studying systematic biology or horticulture are being sought for the Lawrence Memorial Award. The award honors the memory of Dr. George H. M. Lawrence, founding Director of the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation. The award provides \$2,000 to support travel for doctoral dissertation research in systematic botany or horticulture, or the history of the plant sciences, including literature and exploration.

Direct applications will not be accepted. Nominations must be submitted by the student's advisor. Students must have achieved official candidacy.

Supporting materials should describe briefly but clearly the candidate's program of research and how it would be significantly enhanced by travel that the Award would support. Letters of nomination and supporting materials, including seconding letters, should be received by the Committee no later than 1 May 2015 and should be directed to: Dr. R. W. Kiger, Hunt Institute, Carnegie Mellon University, 5000 Forbes Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3890 USA.

### **Candidates for NSC Alliance Board of Directors**

A reminder that nominations for the NSC Alliance Board of Directors are due no later than 5:00 PM Eastern Time on 2 November 2014. NSC Alliance member representatives received an email in early October with additional information on the proposed slate of candidates and details on how to submit additional nominations. For more information, contact Robert Gropp at [rgropp@aibs.org](mailto:rgropp@aibs.org).

### **NSC Alliance Board to Meet in December**

The next meeting of the NSC Alliance Board of Directors will be held in Washington, DC, on 18-19 December 2014. For more information about the Board and NSC Alliance, please visit [www.nscalliance.org](http://www.nscalliance.org).

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The Natural Science Collections Alliance is a Washington, D.C.-based nonprofit association that serves as an advocate for natural science collections, the institutions that preserve them, and the research and education that extend from them for the benefit of science, society, and stewardship of the environment. NSC Alliance members are part of an international community of museums, botanical gardens, herbariums, universities, and other institutions that house natural science collections and utilize them in research, exhibitions, academic and informal science education, and outreach activities. Website: [www.NSCAlliance.org](http://www.NSCAlliance.org).

The NSC Alliance Washington Report is a publication of the NSC Alliance. For information about membership in the NSC Alliance, please contact [spotter@aibs.org](mailto:spotter@aibs.org).