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JRS Announces Three Grants for Access to Biodiversity Information in Africa

SEATTLE, Washington – January 30, 2015 -- The JRS Biodiversity Foundation announced today three new grants that offer effective approaches to making biodiversity data more accessible in sub-Saharan Africa. The funding to the African Conservation Centre's biodiversity portal in Kenya and to the Tanzania Commission on Science and Technology (COSTECH) will contribute to national platforms for biodiversity data publication and analysis. The support to implement the Africa Biodiversity Heritage Library will make a treasure trove of historical studies of Africa's biodiversity available to researchers, educators and the public.

"JRS is proud to support projects that express our mission of enhancing biodiversity knowledge," said JRS Biodiversity Foundation Executive Director, Don Doering. "Online resources for historical and current environmental information can powerfully link scientists to other stakeholders in their nations' sustainable development."

[African Conservation Centre](#) - Biodiversity Web Portal for Kenya, \$359,600

The African Conservation Centre is a Kenyan non-profit dedicated to the development of conservation capacity in Africa. Providing accessible, high quality data for policy development, research, planning, and management is extremely important in developing more effective ways to support and conserve Kenya's rich biodiversity. The African Conservation Centre will support a broad partnership of biodiversity data holders in Kenya to build a public access web portal of biodiversity information to support decision making in Kenya. The portal will share the data underlying the forthcoming Atlas of Kenya's Biodiversity to be released by Kenya's Ministry of the Environment in 2015. In addition to national level datasets and visualization tools, two of Kenya's 47 counties will pilot the development of a county-specific biodiversity data portal.

[South African National Biodiversity Institute](#) - Biodiversity Heritage Library Africa, \$150,000

The Biodiversity Heritage Library (BHL) is a consortium of natural history and botanical libraries that cooperate to digitize the legacy literature of biodiversity held in their collections and to make that literature available for open access. Though much of the core biodiversity literature from Africa exists in non-African institutions, rich and unique collections of materials reside in the national institutions and universities on the continent. This project will grow BHL Africa through the collaboration, assessment, and digitization of African collections and by creating a sustainable network of institutions and countries to increase access to biodiversity materials held in Sub-Saharan African institutions. This project will also develop the skills of the current BHL Africa members and forge relationships with potential members.

– More –

[Tanzania Commission for Science and Technology \(COSTECH\)](#) - Tanzania Biodiversity Information Management Tool, \$75,000

COSTECH is a parastatal organization with the responsibility of coordinating and promoting science and technology development activities in Tanzania. Tanzania possesses some of the highest biodiversity values in the world, but lacks a unified infrastructure for biodiversity data that is accessible to the full range of stakeholders in the sustainable socio-economic development of Tanzania. The online Tanzania Biodiversity Information Management Tool (BIMT) database previously developed with the financial support of the JRS Biodiversity Foundation, currently accommodates only plant information. This project will improve the functionality of the BIMT and acquire and upload data from various sources on plants, insects and other invertebrates, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds. The project will collaborate with the Eastern African Plant Red List Authority to assess the conservation status of selected plant species based on digitized records. The database and web tools will be used to disseminate information and assess the biodiversity status of protected areas, identify areas of biodiversity richness and elevated environmental threats, and design appropriate conservation strategies.

About the JRS Biodiversity Foundation

Founded in 2004, the JRS Biodiversity Foundation focuses upon supporting biodiversity data and knowledge that are used to preserve and to sustainably manage biodiversity in those developing economies where biodiversity is most threatened. Since 2007, the foundation has awarded \$13.2 million in grants.

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