

For Immediate Release

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**JRS Announces Three Grants for Access to Biodiversity Information in Latin America**

SEATTLE, Washington – February 13, 2015 -- The JRS Biodiversity Foundation announced today three new grants that expand upon prior foundation investments. The Mesoamerican Reef Fund, Universidad Central de Venezuela, and Zoological Society of San Diego have offered effective approaches for making biodiversity information in Latin America more readily available for coral reefs, tropical insects, and plants. "JRS is proud to extend our partnerships and capacity building in Latin America," said JRS Biodiversity Foundation Executive Director, Dr. Don Doering. "These projects will create access to important biodiversity information and will build bridges between scientific research and conservation."

[Mesoamerican Reef Fund](#) - HRI Reef Health Database, \$30,000

JRS previously supported Healthy Reefs for Healthy People (HRI) to develop the HRI Reef Health Database, an open-access online database and visualization tool for Healthy Reefs data and report cards. HRI is a collaborative initiative that generates these tools to measure the health of the Mesoamerican Reef, and delivers credible reports to improve decision-making and sustain social ecosystem well-being. Reefs have high levels of biodiversity, but they are severely threatened from a variety of sources. This project aims to provide easier and better access to more detailed reef health and biodiversity data, which will support marine science research to help monitor and conserve the ecosystem. The data portal will be used to finalize, print, and launch the 2015 Report Card on the Health of the Mesoamerican Reef.

[Universidad Central de Venezuela \(UCV\)](#) - Mobilizing Venezuelan Biodiversity Data, \$100,000

Data about Venezuelan biodiversity from outside Venezuela is often of low quality and only one Venezuelan institution, the Universidad Central de Venezuela through the Museo del Instituto de Zoología Agrícola, Facultad de Agronomía (MIZA)-UCV, has published data to global repositories like the Global Biodiversity Information Facility and the Encyclopedia of Life. The lack of knowledge on how to mobilize data and questions about data copyrights once it is publicly available, are the most probable causes for the lack of accessible biodiversity data. This project is intended to help bridge that gap by bringing together four major Venezuelan institutions with important biodiversity data assets, building their capacities for data mobilization. The project aims to educate key biodiversity data holders in Venezuela through workshops on the current methods of digitization of natural history collections and how to make them publicly accessible. Based in initial collaborations to share data on tropical insects, the partner institutions will be able build a network of data-sharing institutions that hold valuable collections of regional biodiversity data and knowledge.

– More –

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[Zoological Society of San Diego \(ZSSD\)](#) - Enhancing Access to Peruvian Plant Specimens through Herbarium Digitization, \$70,750

The Zoological Society of San Diego (ZSSD) manages the San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research, which has programs across the globe, including conservation projects in Peru, a country of rich floristic diversity. Collecting expeditions have produced thousands of plant specimens in Peruvian herbaria, but those collections are virtually inaccessible to researchers and the public. With prior support from JRS in 2012, ZSSD achieved significant progress in making Peruvian plant collections available through a web portal for public access. ZSSD's efforts have produced over 50,000 specimen images from three major herbaria, marking the complete digitization of one herbarium. This phase of work will focus on completion of digitization of the La Molina University Forestry Herbarium in Lima and the Vargas Herbarium in Cuzco. This project will be a major contributor of floristic data and knowledge in Peru. In addition to digitizing plant specimens and making all images and metadata accessible to the public, the project will update the *Atrium Biodiversity Information System*, create training guides for users of the Atrium, and produce training materials on herbarium digitization.

**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 \$13.2M in grants.

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