For Immediate Release

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Madagascar’s Lemurs Conservation Community Unites to Share Lemurs Knowledge

SEATTLE, Washington – October 26, 2016 – On the eve of Madagascar’s World Lemurs Festival, the JRS Biodiversity Foundation is pleased to announce a new grant of $264,045 to a partnership of leading lemurs conservation scientists to create an online atlas of Madagascar’s Lemurs. The project will be led by the Fondation pour les Aires Protégées et la Biodiversité de Madagascar ([FAPBM](http://www.fapbm.org)) in partnership with the [Wildlife Conservation Society – Madagascar](http://programs.wcs.org/madagascar/) ) and the Groupe d'Etude et de Recherche sur les Primates de Madagascar ([GERP](http://www.gerp.mg/)), who will contribute their experience with lemurs conservation and biodiversity informatics in Madagascar.

Madagascar is like no other place on earth, and that’s because 9 out of every 10 plants and animals on the island nation are found nowhere else on earth. This unique biodiversity faces extreme pressure from human activities such as slash-and-burn agriculture and hunting. As the country’s most emblematic animals, Madagascar’s 107 lemur species are the quintessential example of how the biodiversity threat dynamic operates in the country.

Lemurs have captured a passionate international and national conservation community that has leveraged significant support for investment in research and field-based conservation actions. Yet efforts to date have failed to reverse declines in lemur conservation status. A large part of this failure can be attributed to poor access to knowledge about lemur populations. That is, it’s difficult to find out exactly how many lemurs there are and where they live, hampering efforts to understand their behavior and to protect critical habitats. The lemur conservation and research communities lack a robust platform to share knowledge and create synergy among research, policy, and conservation actions.

Following a technical meeting of more than 40 representatives from lemur conservation organizations in February 2016, supported by a [planning grant from JRS](http://jrsbiodiversity.org/grants/wildlife-conservation-society-madagascar-2015/), a consortium of local conservation partners – the Madagascar Biodiversity Fund ([FAPBM](http://www.fapbm.org/)), Wildlife Conservation Society Madagascar ([WCS](http://programs.wcs.org/madagascar/)) and the Groupe d'Etude et de Recherche sur les Primates de Madagascar ([GERP](http://www.gerp.mg/)) – developed a plan to address this problem by building the ‘Madagascar Lemurs Portal’.

The project leaders envision that the Madagascar Lemurs Portal will become an indispensable tool in conservation evaluation and decision making processes, contributing to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List assessments and to donor and partner monitoring of protected area effectiveness. They aim that it will continuously evolve with the addition of new data sources from a community of engaged researchers, citizens, and managers. In this way, they hope that the portal will contribute directly to improved lemur conservation.

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JRS believes that when decision makers truly understand the essential needfor biodiversity and the urgent threat it faces, *and* when they have greater access to biodiversity data that is high quality, relevant, easily-accessible, and timely, they will fight to preserve biodiversity by making informed decisions about conservation and sustainable development.

See “[Development of the Madagascar Lemurs Portal](http://jrsbiodiversity.org/grants/fapbm-2016/)”

**About the JRS Biodiversity Foundation –** The mission of the JRS Biodiversity Foundation is to increase access to and use of information that will lead to greater biodiversity conservation and more sustainable development in sub-Saharan Africa. Founded in 2004, the JRS Biodiversity Foundation works to increase the capacity of the institutions and people who collect, manage, and disseminate biodiversity data and information in sub-Sahaban Africa, and to connect this knowledge to stakeholders who make and influence decisions that are crucial to supporting biodiversity. The foundation has awarded more than $13.5M in grants since 2007. Visit us online at <http://www.jrsbiodiversity.org>

**About FAPBM –** The Fondation pour les Aires Protégées et la Biodiversité de Madagascar (FAPBM) is a private Malagasy foundation created in 2005 with the Malagasy Government, Conservation International, and the WWF as the first contributors. The Foundation strives for the financial sustainability of Madagascar's protected areas and biodiversity. With USD 52 million in capital, the Foundation supports 2 million hectares of protected areas spread over 28 sites, which cover 1/3 of Madagascar Protected Areas System. Grants of the Foundation also positively impact on 1 million lives through the management of sites or identification of alternative activities. Visit online at <http://www.fapbm.org>.

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