

## In Memoriam

**Donald Howard Messersmith**

**December 17, 1928–January 8, 2024**



Don Messersmith, known to many in the natural history field and founder of what is now the Crowder-Messersmith Fund, passed away shortly after his 95th birthday. He had recently moved into his daughter Heidi's home and immediately started a list of birds in the yard.

Don taught entomology, ornithology, and environmental science at the University of Maryland. In addition, he taught at the Smithsonian, Audubon Naturalist Society (now Nature Forward), U.S. Department of Agriculture Extension Program, and John Hopkins Senior program. Many students of all ages benefited from Don's teachings and became impactful leaders in the natural history field from volunteer stream monitors to wildlife biologists.

His connection to the Crowder-Messersmith Fund which honors Orville Crowder dates to the 1960s. Orville Crowder, Don's friend and mentor, formed World Nature Tours and together with Don were the first to lead worldwide natural history tours as a means to further world nature conservation. When Crowder died in 1974,

he left his estate to Don and his wife Sherry where upon they created the Crowder Memorial Fund as part of World Nature Tours to carry on Crowder's worldwide conservation work.

The first grants from the Fund in 1976 were \$250 for bird bands for the Cyprus Ornithological Society and \$300 for a tranquillizer gun for Chiapas, Mexico. In 1998, the Fund was transferred to the Audubon Naturalist Society which renamed the fund Crowder-Messersmith Fund to also honor Don and Sherry for their many years of service to the natural history community and nature conservation. Don, although no longer involved, followed the grant awards with great interest and took great pleasure out of each successful project. His spirit will live on in each project going forward.

*Family requests that donations in memory of their beloved father be made to the Crowder-Messersmith Fund at <https://natureforward.org/crowder-messersmith-fund/>.*

## Latest News on the Fund's Grantees

The Crowder-Messersmith Conservation Fund honors Orville Crowder and Don and Sherry Messersmith, leaders in nature tourism, as a means to further global nature conservation. The Fund supports the goals of Nature Forward by helping small, local conservation and education projects in developing countries. It provides seed money to communities and individuals whose projects have not attracted major support from other sources. In 2023, we were able to offer 7 grants selected from the 218 submitted. These grantees join those from more than 65 countries that have received awards since 1976.

### 2023 Projects Underway:

- Provide *counseling and wildlife education* to inmates who have been sentenced for wildlife poaching in the nearby national park In **Zambia**.
- Increase awareness of *invasive plant species* that threaten biodiversity and destroy prime habitat of endangered rhinos, elephants, and tigers in **Nepal**.
- Develop eco-guardianships in eastern **Nepal** to reduce threats to the highly endangered *Chinese and Indian Pangolins*.
- Provide *community-based restoration and alternative livelihoods development* in the Mount Muanenguba forest area, one of the most fragile mountainous landscapes in **Cameroon**.
- Safeguard the last stronghold of the critically endangered *West African Slender-Snouted Crocodile* in **Gambia**.
- Educate and train local residents to conserve threatened *riverine migratory birds* in western **Bangladesh**.
- Build local community capacities in *Humpback Whale* research In **El Salvador**.



Indian pangolin, photo by Gerald Cubitt ©



## 2022 Projects Completed

- *Crane Conservation Volunteers* in **Kenya** stimulated interest in the local community, recruiting and training bird guides in an area whose avifauna is largely unstudied and/or unpublished.
- Engaged indigenous populations in **Colombia** through outreach projects including youth conservation training programs in the Conservation of endangered populations of *mountain tapirs*.
- Developed an indigenous community-based monitoring project with the Baka pygmy communities focused on endangered *elephants, gorillas, and chimpanzees* in unprotected forests outside the Dja Reserve in **Cameroon**.
- Focused on *safeguarding the critically endangered Home's Hinge-back tortoise* through engagement in a variety of mediums with hunters, community leaders and the entire local population in the Bobiri Forest Reserve in **Ghana**.
- In central **Benin**, developed alternative sources of income and community sensitization for the conservation of threatened *pangolins*.
- Continued ongoing projects expanding the protection of *endangered sea turtles* and beach restoration (supported by past C-M grants), and conducted community training in a bird monitoring program on Santiago Island, **Cape Verde**.
- Developed *literacy-based educational programs* for the conservation of island species and habitats, which augmented teaching gaps present in the Babuyan Group of Islands in the northern **Philippines**.
- In the Nayar River Valley in **India**, developed conservation programs for schoolchildren and non-school-going children focused on protection of the *endangered Golden Mahseer fish*.
- With a multi-stakeholder approach, developed a conservation plan that Improves management techniques for pastures, farms and livestock. This is the centerpiece of a project to *enhance coexistence with endangered jaguars* and other predators in the lowland Choco region of **Ecuador**.



Clearing debris from beach to protect endangered seas turtles, Cape Verde. Picture submitted by grantee.



Youth participate in Crocodile Fair and learn about the Gharial long-snouted crocodile and conservation efforts, Nepal. Picture submitted by grantee.

### **Thank You C-M Committee Members**

The Crowder-Messersmith Fund would like to thank its committee members, who volunteer their time and expertise: Daphne Gemmill (chair), Betsy Connole, Marcie Francis, Vance Hyndman, Chris Herman, Alan Johnston, Linette Landers, and Kraemer Lovelace.

We would also like to thank Carol Hayes, who retired in 2023 after years of ably providing the all-important staff support. After a year of devoted service as Administrative Assistant, Vicky O'Reilly has moved on and will be replaced by Rhonda Kranz in January 2024. Thank you Vicki and welcome Rhonda!

### **Thank you to our Donors!**

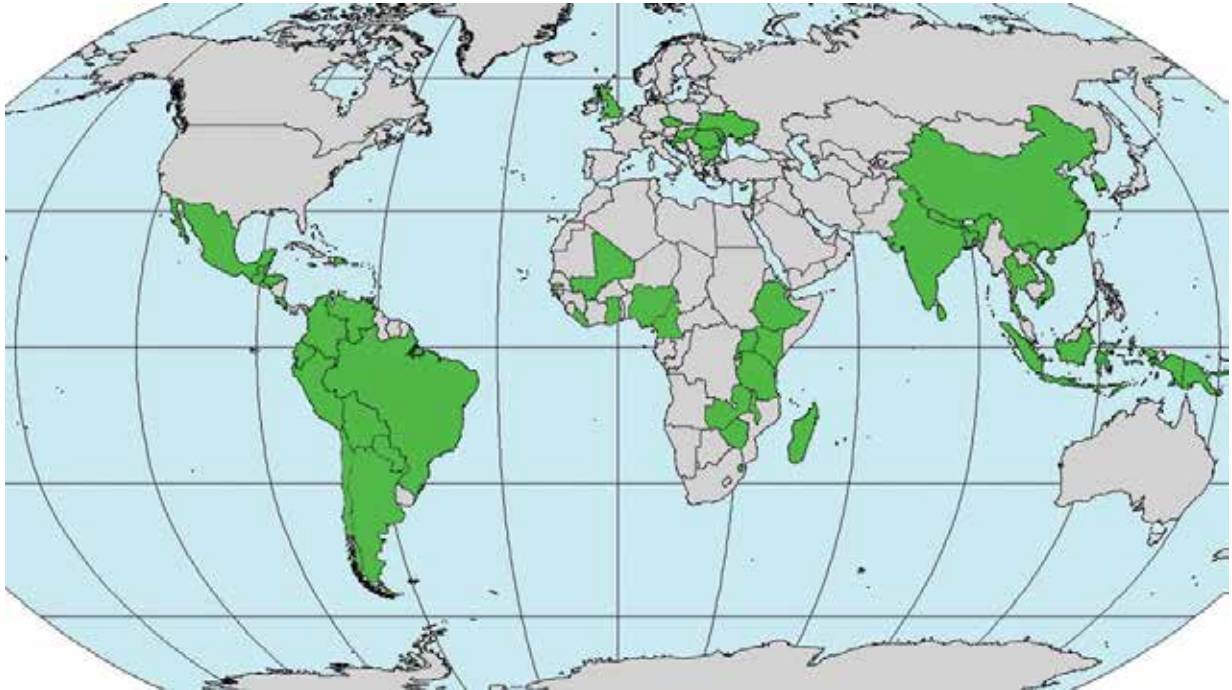
A special thank you to contributions made to the C-M Fund by Paul Pisano, Daphne Gemmill, Barbara Nash, Jeannine Dorothy, Linda Keenan and Peter Day, Doris (Woody) and Rae Dubois, and Anonymous donors.

### **Contributions to the Crowder-Messersmith Conservation Fund**

This small, innovative grants program, together with the international foray program, allows Nature Forward members to experience other cultures and environments and to promote conservation awareness and protection beyond our borders. Your contributions to the Fund allow us to support more projects in developing countries. Please be sure to designate your donation to the Crowder-Messersmith Conservation Fund.

To contribute, go to the Nature Forward Donate page <https://give.natureforward.org/give/413799/#!/donation/checkout> and scroll down to choose Crowder Messersmith Fund. You can also send a check to: Crowder-Messersmith Fund, Nature Forward, 8940 Jones Mill Rd., Chevy Chase, MD 20815.

# Where are Crowder–Messersmith Conservation Grants located?



The map illustrates countries (in green) which have received grants.

<p><b>NORTH AMERICA/ CARIBBEAN</b></p> <p>Bahamas <b>2</b>            Curacao <b>1</b>            Dominican Republic <b>1</b>            Jamaica <b>1</b>            Mexico <b>9</b>            Puerto Rico <b>3</b>            Trinidad &amp; Tobago <b>2</b>            West Indies <b>1</b></p>	<p>Costa Rica <b>4</b>            Ecuador <b>4</b>            El Salvador <b>1</b>            Falkland Islands <b>2</b>            Guatemala <b>3</b>            Honduras <b>4</b>            Paraguay <b>1</b>            Peru <b>6</b>            Venezuela <b>1</b></p>	<p>Moldova <b>4</b>            Romania <b>1</b>            United Kingdom <b>4</b>            Ukraine <b>5</b></p>	<p>Rwanda <b>1</b>            Tanzania <b>1</b>            Uganda <b>6</b>            Zambia <b>1</b>            Zimbabwe <b>2</b></p>
<p><b>SOUTH AMERICA</b></p> <p>Argentina <b>4</b>            Belize <b>3</b>            Bolivia <b>4</b>            Brazil <b>4</b>            Chile <b>1</b>            Columbia <b>4</b></p>	<p><b>EUROPE &amp; MIDEAST</b></p> <p>Armenia <b>1</b>            Bosnia &amp; Herzegovina <b>1</b>            Bulgaria <b>1</b>            Croatia <b>1</b>            Czech Republic <b>1</b>            Guernsey <b>2</b>            Hungary <b>1</b>            Israel <b>4</b></p>	<p><b>AFRICA</b></p> <p>Benin <b>4</b>            Cameroon <b>4</b>            Cape Verde <b>2</b>            Eswatini <b>1</b>            Ethiopia <b>4</b>            Gambia <b>1</b>            Ghana <b>3</b>            Kenya <b>10</b>            Liberia <b>1</b>            Madagascar <b>3</b>            Malawi <b>2</b>            Mali <b>1</b>            Nigeria <b>1</b></p>	<p><b>ASIA &amp; THE PACIFIC</b></p> <p>Bangladesh <b>1</b>            China <b>4</b>            India <b>10</b>            Indonesia <b>1</b>            Nepal <b>14</b>            Philippines <b>1</b>            Papua New Guinea <b>1</b>            South Korea <b>1</b>            Sri Lanka <b>4</b>            Thailand <b>1</b>            Vietnam <b>1</b></p>

The table shows the total number of grants to that country.