

# Society of Vertebrate Paleontology

## Member at Large Nominee Biographies

(2018-2020 term)

**William J. Sanders**

**Nancy J. Stevens**

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### William J. Sanders



**Current position:** Senior Research Laboratory Specialist, Assistant Research Scientist, University of Michigan Museum of Paleontology.

My academic training started at University of Chicago, where I received my A.B. in Anthropology. I subsequently studied Paleoanthropology under Terry Harrison at NYU (M.Phil., Ph.D.), working on australopithecine vertebrae for my dissertation project. Most of my career in Vertebrate Paleontology has been spent at the University of Michigan, where I have worked since 1988 as the Chief Preparator of the Vertebrate Fossil Preparation Lab and as a research scientist in the Museum of Paleontology and Department of Anthropology. The research subjects I have concentrated on are field- and specimen-based, and include the evolution and fossil record of catarrhine primates, proboscideans, and embrithopods. My research and fieldwork travels are concentrated in the Old World (Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Ethiopia, South Africa, Egypt, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Pakistan, China, the United Kingdom, Germany, Belgium, and France), where I have been fortunate to work with many generous and interesting colleagues from whom I have learned much. I am currently engaged in projects from late Eocene Birket Qarun, Egypt to the early Miocene of Buluk, Kenya and late Miocene Baynunah Formation in Abu Dhabi, and from the early Pliocene of Kanapoi and Ileret, Kenya to the late Pleistocene of Natodomeri, Kenya, remaining happily immersed in our discipline. My efforts in co-editing the *Cenozoic Mammals of Africa* volume (2010) encapsulate the focus of my research interests and the collaborative spirit in which I approach my work.

I have been an enthusiastic member of the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology for 32 years, and currently serve on the Program, Preparator's, and Archive Committees. Previously, I chaired the Preparator's (Hix) Grant Committee (2004-2007) and Preparator's Committee (2006-2009), during which time I worked closely with the Program and Executive Committees to help establish the Preparator's symposia as fixed sessions within the annual meetings, a permanent Preparator's demonstration table, preparation and conservations workshops, and to restore and enhance funding for the Preparator's (Hix) Grant, which supports critical training in, and research on, preparation and conservation techniques and use of materials. As I view the academic and technical development of young colleagues as our most important concern, I am especially delighted to see several generations of young scholars that I have mentored become successful and important members of our paleontological community and Society, among them a number of professional preparators and conservators in the United States, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Uganda, and India. I look forward to maintaining my dedication to the growth and development of our discipline through continued service to the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology.

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### Nancy J. Stevens



**Current position:** Professor and Presidential Research Scholar, Department of Biomedical Sciences, and Center for Ecology and Evolutionary Studies, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio, USA; Research Affiliate, Palaeontology Division, National Museums of Kenya (2005-present); Research Associate, Natural History Division, Michigan State University Museum (2004-present).

**Previous positions:** Associate Professor, Department of Biomedical Sciences, Ohio University (2011-2014). Assistant Professor, Department of Biomedical Sciences, Ohio University (2006-2011).

**Education:** PhD, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York, USA (2003); MA, Stony Brook University, Stony Brook, New York (1998); MPhil, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, United Kingdom (1994); BS, Michigan State University, East Lansing, Michigan, USA (1992).

**Professional service (SVP):** Chair, Program for Scientists from Economically Developing Nations (2008-present); Member, Membership Committee (2008-present); SEDN Liaison, Development Committee (2008-present); Chair, Skinner Award Committee (2008).

**Professional service (non-SVP):** Chair, Advisory Board, Environmental Studies Program, Ohio University; Member, Advisory Board, African Studies Program, Ohio University; Co-Director, Exploring the Natural World Project, Ohio University Learning and Media Group; Member, Museum Studies Advisory Committee, Ohio University.

**Research interests:** Mammalian evolution and paleobiology; functional morphology; biogeography; extinction dynamics; paleoecology. Published > 40 peer reviewed research papers.

Vertebrate paleontology is a dynamic, interdisciplinary field. Each day, exciting discoveries in field and laboratory settings across the globe advance scientific knowledge and provide a backdrop for promoting public science literacy regarding pivotal concepts such as evolution and environmental change. Creatively engaging the public's interest in vertebrate paleontology propels education on fundamental concepts in biology, geology and other fields of science—and indeed in the process of scientific inquiry more generally, as new discoveries offer opportunities for testing and refining hypotheses about how life evolves. Importantly, vertebrate paleontology provides a deep-time context for understanding the presently intensified levels of natural and anthropogenic environmental changes affecting our planet, and the ultimate consequence for organisms unable to adapt, namely extinction. I am committed to advancing paleontological exploration, and promoting collaborations that energize vertebrate paleontology. Examples include: linking junior researchers with established scientists to offer vital perspectives and mentorship, facilitating international collaborative research networks, and encouraging creative ways of conveying our findings to society at large. Contributors to the vibrant field of vertebrate paleontology hail from museums, universities, and a diversity of other settings, including emerging employment pathways that convey high-impact roles in scientific communication. I believe that leveraging the unique strengths of our diverse membership offers exciting prospects for advancing scientific knowledge on evolution and environmental change through time, and directing the impact of this information to benefit society.

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