

Dawson Grant

The Mary R. Dawson Predoctoral Fellowship Grant recognizes and supports graduate student research excellence. This award recognizes research excellence and promote a successful career in Vertebrate Paleontology by supporting the recipient's dissertation research travel, data collection and analyses.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

- **Current membership in SVP is required. You will not be able to apply for the award unless your membership is current in the system.**
- The applicant must be a PhD candidate (i.e., completed qualifying exam or equivalent) at time of application.
- The successful applicant will be chosen on the basis of scholarly contribution of the proposed project, excellence in student professional activities, and leadership and promise of a productive and important professional role in Vertebrate Paleontology.

HOW TO APPLY

Please utilize the SVP online award submission system to apply. **Any materials sent by e-mail, fax or mail will NOT be reviewed.** Once you click "submit" the award application is complete, so be sure to double check that all fields and uploads are exactly as you wish **BEFORE clicking "submit"**. Be sure to name all uploaded documents with your name and a description of the attachment (e.g. John Smith Photo). Have the following items ready when you submit your application:

1) **A SINGLE pdf file** that includes the following items **in the order listed below**:

- Detailed description of dissertation research project (**three pages, single-spaced maximum**). Include the hypotheses you aim to test and proposed methods, the intellectual merit of the proposed research and its broader relevance to advancing the field of Vertebrate Paleontology, and a brief outline of organization of the research, the timetable and logistics of your proposed project. Proposals that exceed the page limit will be automatically rejected.
- Literature Cited
- Budget and Justification Document (**one page maximum**). Include a breakdown of how the award would be used and a list of other research support (current and applied for), travel expenses, permit costs, professional expenses, supplies, additional expenses.
- Curriculum Vitae
- Advisor Letter of Support with full contact information and a statement that the applicant has been admitted to candidacy for a PhD (or equivalent)

- Non-advisor Letter of Support with full contact information
- 2) Nominee Photo
 - 3) A Word .doc version of a brief (300-500 word) bio of the applicant

FOR SUCCESSFUL STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF APPLICATIONS

- Please follow the guidelines for content listed under the first bullet point for “How to Apply”
- Successful applications for this award must present a hypothesis that the project will test.
- Successful applications for this award must describe the methods that will be used in the project sufficiently to allow their evaluation.
- Successful applications for this award must articulate the broader significance of the project and its potential results for the field of vertebrate paleontology and the broader community (scientific and/or public).
- To ensure your application addresses the critical points noted above, delineation of the project under subheadings is encouraged, based on the following (or a similar) model:

Background

Objective(s) and Hypotheses

Methods (including Timetable and Logistics)

Broader Significance to Vertebrate Paleontology and Other Fields

The 2020 awards application process is now closed.

Learn more about Dr. Dawson

Dr. Mary Dawson is an Honorary Member of SVP (since 1999 and a member of SVP since 1954) and is Curator Emeritus of Vertebrate Paleontology at Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. As of the year 2011, Dawson has celebrated more than 45 years at the Museum, for 30 years of which she was curator. As Head of the section, Dr. Dawson was responsible for the fourth largest vertebrate fossil collection in North America.

Dawson’s research focus is on fossil mammals, concentrating on early Tertiary faunas and the evolution of rodents and rabbits. Her graduate thesis was groundbreaking: a comprehensive study of North American rabbits dating from 45 million to 1 million years ago, showing not just their relationships to predators or prey, but subtle changes within their own species that led to the evolution of today's jackrabbits and cottontails. Notable recent species which Dawson has described include Laonastes, a Southeast Asian mammal which she determined to be a living fossil, and Puijila, a missing link in the origin of seals, sea lions and walrus.

In 2002, Dawson was named the recipient of the A.S. Romer - G. G. Simpson Medal, the highest award presented by the Society of Vertebrate Paleontology. She was only the second woman, and the first American woman, to receive the award. The A.S. Romer - G. G. Simpson Medal is her second award from the society; she was named an Honorary Member of SVP in 1999 for her numerous contributions to the field of paleontology.

Other awards and honors include the prestigious Arnold Guyot Prize in 1981, awarded by the National Geographic Society in recognition of her research in the Arctic. In 1975, she provided the fossil evidence that the greenhouse effect existed in North America 55 million years ago when she uncovered the fossil remains of alligators and tortoises within the Arctic Circle. Dawson also discovered the first prehistoric mammals within the Arctic Circle, providing evidence of a land bridge stretching from North America to Europe and explaining why fossils of North American horses, rhinoceroses and other mammals found in the American West resembled fossils found in France.

A native of Michigan, Dawson received her BS from Michigan State College and her PhD from the University of Kansas. She joined Carnegie Museum of Natural History as a research associate in the Section of Vertebrate Paleontology in 1962 and was appointed curator in 1972. She has also served as Acting Director of the Museum, Chair of the Earth Sciences Division, and is an adjunct professor in the Department of Geology and Planetary Sciences at the University of Pittsburgh.

Honors

- 1983 Chatham College Women in Science Award
- 1999 Doctor of Humane Letters honoris causa, Chatham College
- 2003 Michigan State University, College of Natural Science Alumni Association Outstanding Alumna Award
- 2005 Michigan State University, Doctor of Science (hon.)
- 2006 Fellow, The Paleontological Society
- 2006 Honoree, Women and Girls Foundation (Pittsburgh)

QUESTIONS?

Dr. Richard Blob, Chair, Dawson Grant Panel

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