

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

This year has already been an extremely busy one for the Tapir Specialist Group. We continue to work hard to improve our effectiveness in terms of the conservation of tapirs and their remaining habitats in Latin America and Southeast Asia. Most of our time and energy has been spent on structuring the recently established Tapir Specialist Group Conservation Fund (TSGCF), a vehicle to raise funds for tapir conservation projects. We have been conducting a number of fundraising campaigns in partnership with the Tapir Preservation Fund (TPF), the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), and the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG). This is the first time that all four major tapir conservation groups have joined forces to raise funds for tapir conservation. The following organisations etc have been targeted to raise funds for the TSGCF and these are conservation NGOs, corporations, trusts and foundations, tapir-holding institutions and zoos worldwide and tapir researchers and enthusiasts. The funds are being collected and managed by the Tapir Preservation Fund. The TSGCF will support in-situ and ex-situ research, promote education work with local communities within the tapirs' range and implement conservation recommendations. We should be ready to announce our first call for proposals in the second semester of 2003.

One of our TSGCF fundraising campaigns is the "Friends of TSG" programme. The main approach of this

programme is to contact potential private donors and invite them to make an annual contribution to the TSGCF. We have several different ranges of contribution and each individual can decide how much she/he would like to donate. With the invaluable help and totally voluntary work of Kate Wilson, TPF board member, and Gilia Angell, web designer with



Amazon.com, both big tapir fans and supporters, we designed a flyer explaining the programme and a donation form which we then mailed to our entire mailing list ... over 550 people worldwide. I am quite confident that all of you reading this article received our flyer a few weeks ago! It is with much satisfaction that I can tell you that donations are coming in on a regular basis and Sheryl Todd, as always, has been working hard to collect the funds and make sure they will soon be ready for distribution. For further information about the "Friends of TSG" project and the TSG Conservation Fund, please visit the web page: <http://www.tapirback.com/tapirgal/TSGCF/>. I would like to thank Sheryl, Gilia and Kate for all their help with making this project a reality! Also, thank you VERY MUCH to all of you who have made donations!

Also with regard to fundraising, the TSG has been trying to help tapir researchers and conservationists approach specific funding agencies in order to raise funds for their projects. We have been reviewing and endorsing a growing number of very good proposals that has helped tapir researchers to obtain the funds they need to conduct their activities. Additionally, we have contacted a number of zoological institutions worldwide over the past year, especially those holding tapirs, and compiled a list of potential funding sources for tapir-related projects. This compilation has been made available for TSG members and other tapir researchers and we hope it will help everyone who is seeking funds.

Another major priority for the TSG right now is the organisation of the Second International Tapir Symposium, to be held in Panama City, Republic of Panama, from January 10 to 16, 2004. The main organisers of the Second Symposium are the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group (TSG), and the American Zoo and Aquarium Association

(AZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG). The Tapir Preservation Fund (TPF) will also be involved. Phil Schaeffer with Caligo Ventures, United States, will be our symposium manager once again, and ANCON Expeditions will be the ground operator in Panama. The first symposium, held in Costa Rica in November 2001, attracted 85 participants from 22 countries, and proved to be a major boost for tapir conservation. The Second Symposium will once again bring together a multi-faceted group of tapir experts, including field biologists, educators, captivity specialists, academicians, researchers, veterinarians, government authorities, politicians and other interested parties. The symposium's planning committee visited Panama in January 2003 and met the Mayor of Panama City, Juan Carlos Navarro. Mayor Navarro was the founding Executive Director of ANCON, Panama's National Association for the Conservation of Nature, one of the leading environmental organisations of the region since 1985 and he also served as Regional Councilor for IUCN. The mayor has not only agreed to give the opening address at the symposium but has committed the resources of his entire staff to assist us in promoting this conference. As a result of our visit to Panama, the AZA Tapir TAG and the Houston Zoo are already working on improving the tapir facilities at the Summit Zoo, just outside of Panama City. This addresses our holistic approach to the Second International Tapir Symposium.

An important event planned for the Symposium is an auction to raise seed funds for the TSG Conservation Fund. Attendees will be asked to bring typical items from their countries

TAPIR SYMPOSIUM



2004 PANAMA



Meeting with the Mayor of Panama City, Juan Carlos Navarro. From left to right: Luis Eduardo Arias (Mayor's secretary), Phil Schaeffer (Caligo Ventures), Marco Gandasegui (ANCON Expeditions), Rick Barongi (Houston Zoo, AZA Tapir TAG), Mayor Juan Carlos Navarro, Patricia Medici (Chair, TSG), Charles Foerster (Deputy-Chair, TSG), and Alberto Mendoza (Houston Zoo). Credit: Rick Barongi

to sell at the auction. The auction conducted during the First International Tapir Symposium in Costa Rica raised \$10,000 to expand tapir habitat in Costa Rica. Mid-conference trips will provide the opportunity for participants to either visit a tapir breeding facility (Summit Zoo), or to spend the day at Barro Colorado Island (BCI), one of the most studied patches of tropical forest and one that is managed by the Smithsonian Institution. Post-conference tours will also be available for those who wish to stay and enjoy Panama's wonderful natural resources. For more detailed information about the Second International Tapir Symposium please visit the web site: <http://www.caligo.com/tapir/>. The web site includes a request form that you can complete and submit if you are interested on being included in our mailing list and receiving information on the Symposium programme schedule, registration and other information as it develops.

The major goal of the Second Symposium is to review the current conservation status of and threats to tapirs worldwide, addressing and prioritising the most serious issues facing tapir conservation and generating recommendations and strategies necessary for their conservation, their remaining habitats, and biological diversity as a whole. Any results and recommendations coming from the Second Symposium will be incorporated into the upcoming revision of the 1997 *IUCN/SSC Tapir Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan*. Other documents to be incorporated as chapters in the next edition of the Tapir Action Plan are the National Programme for Tapir Conservation and Recovery in Colombia, produced in 2002 by the Colombian Ministry of Environment and the Natural Science Institute of the National University of Colombia; the National Action Plan for Tapir Conservation and Recovery in Mexico under development by the Mexican Committee for

Tapir Conservation and Recovery (MCT) sponsored by the Mexican Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources; and the Malay Tapir Action Plan, which will be developed during the upcoming Malay Tapir Conservation Workshop that will be held in Malaysia, from August 12 to 16, 2003. We were also recently informed that the Panamanian Mammal Society (SOMASPA), in partnership with the Autoridad Nacional del Ambiente (ANAM) and the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute, has been conducting an evaluation of the conservation status of tapirs in Panama, aiming to produce a regional action plan for tapirs. This document may also be incorporated into the new version of the Tapir Action Plan.

Due to a combination of unforeseen circumstances the Tapir Specialist Group, the European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), and the IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG), in consultation with the Department of Wildlife and National Parks (DWNP), Malaysia, decided to postpone the Malay Tapir

Conservation Workshop until 12-16 August 2003. The workshop was originally scheduled for 12-16 April 2003. A considerable number of participants indicated the necessity of acquiring financial support and this requires more time in order to raise the funds needed to make the workshop an event that can be attended by all. Moreover the current world economic situation is making fundraising more difficult than anticipated. The location and the programme will remain the same. We are confident that this decision has been made in the best interest of everyone concerned, and that it will ultimately lead to a better and more productive workshop. Nico van Strien continues to work on the Malay Tapir central database that



Second International Tapir Symposium Planning Committee during visit to Republic of Panama in January 2003. From left to right: Alberto Mendoza (Houston Zoo), Phil Schaeffer (Caligo Ventures), Patricia Medici (Chair, TSG), and Rick Barongi (Houston Zoo, AZA Tapir TAG). Credit: Patricia Medici

will be produced to support the workshop in Malaysia.

I am very thankful to our new Zoo Coordinator, Siân Waters, who has been putting in a lot of time and energy in improving the structure and effectiveness of our TSG Zoo Committee. Her first report will appear in the next newsletter.

The Houston Zoo graphic department continues to work hard on the development of educational and organisational brochures for the TSG. I had the chance to see the first drafts during a meeting with Alberto Mendoza, Houston Zoo's Community Programmes Coordinator, during our visit to Panama in January and I must tell you that the brochures look great! I would like to thank the Houston Zoo, especially Alberto and Kelly Russo, for all the hard work they have been putting into this project!

Finally, I would like to stress once again how grateful I am for the invaluable assistance of a number of volunteers who help us to conduct our activities and projects. I receive

about 100 e-mail messages a day and there are always many messages coming from people offering to help in some way. It is incredible how many tapir fans there are out there! And, it is with the help of these people that we have been turning several projects we envisioned into reality! I will not mention any more names here, but you know who YOU are!

THANK YOU!

My very best wishes,

Patrícia Medici

Chair, IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group
Avenida Perdizes, nº 285, Vila São Paulo,
Teodoro Sampaio
São Paulo, CEP: 19280-000, Brazil
Phone & Fax: +55-18-3282-4690
E-mail: epmedici@uol.com.br

GENERAL NEWS

New Ramsar Site in the Pantanal (An Area Where Lowland Tapirs Occur)

Contributed by Mike Chong, Malaysia

The Bureau of the Convention on Wetlands is delighted to announce that Brazil has designated a significant portion of the Pantanal in Mato Grosso State as a Wetland of International Importance, to complement the related 135,000-hectare Pantanal Matogrossense Ramsar site. An extraordinarily interesting feature of Brazil's eighth site is the fact that it is an extensive privately owned protected area, with government authorization, and includes such management aids as 5 fire control towers, an airplane, 6 boats, 6 all-terrain vehicles, and 26 professional staff and 16 trained rangers, and 1 airplane pilot. The separately-managed hotel employs 100 people, a 500-square-meter visitors' centre is in construction, and a nearby social ecotourism lodge on the other side of the Cuiabá River has 120 beds -- currently, around 10,000 visitors come to enjoy the reserve per year. The Serviço Nacional do Comércio (SESC) is a non-profit organization created by law and funded through an annual contribution from private enterprises, with branches in every state in the country. As a Reserva Particular do Patrimônio Natural (RPPN), its legal status is said to differ from a national park only in terms of ownership; the owner could legally sell the area but, under the RPPN law, only if the objective of nature protection would not be altered. Here is a brief description of the site drawn from

the Ramsar Information Sheet by Ramsar's Julio Montes de Oca (Spanish below):

Reserva Particular do Patrimônio Natural SESC Pantanal. 06/12/02; Mato Grosso State; 87,871 ha; 16°39'S 056°15'W. Privately owned nature reserve. A significant and representative sample of the large Pantanal wetlands, known as Poconé's Pantanal, a private estate fully owned by the Serviço Nacional do Comércio (SESC) and established in 1998 as a reserve. The site, a mix of permanent rivers, seasonal streams, permanent and seasonal floodplain fresh water lakes, shrub-dominated wetlands, and seasonally flooded forests, satisfies all eight Ramsar criteria for designation as a Wetland of International Importance and is an excellent ecological complement to the Pantanal Matogrossense, already on the Ramsar List. The site contains several endangered species including hyacinth macaws (*Anodorhynchus hyacinthinus*), giant otters (*Pteronura brasiliensis*), and marsh deer (*Blastocerus dichotomus*), as well as numerous nesting sites for the rare Jabiru (*Jabiru mycteria*). Populations of over 20,000 cormorants (*Phalacrocorax brasiliensis*) and some of the Pantanal's healthiest nesting sites for wood stork (*Mycteria americana*) are also found within. Many of the 260 fish species in the Pantanal are also believed to be found in the Reserva, a good number having a high commercial value. Since sport and commercial fishing is prohibited inside, the reserve provides essential ecological refuge for fish in the Cuiabá and São Lourenço rivers. The SESC administers this private reserve, under the supervision of the Brazilian Institute for the Environment and Natural Renewable Resources (IBAMA), and is responsible for implementing its management plan and carrying out environmental education