

From the Chair

Letter from the Chair Patrícia Medici

Here we are again ... six months have passed since the publication of the last issue of the *Tapir Conservation* Newsletter and it is time to prepare another report and update all of you on our most recent activities. I have to be honest and admit that it is becoming harder and harder to write this Letter from the Chair! Every time I sit down in front of my computer to write this letter I realize how much our group has been doing and how much we have progressed in our effectiveness in terms of conservation of the four tapir species. It is really difficult to select the topics I want to mention! There is so much going on, so many activities being conducted, so many actions being put into practice, so many competent, incredible people working so hard ... but ... I know I have to select the highlights; otherwise this letter would end up having dozens of pages! Let me give it a try!

Before I say anything else, I would like to welcome our new *Tapir Conservation* Newsletter Contributions Editor, Leonardo Salas ... Known to the tapir community as Leo! As you will remember, our previous contributions editor was Siân Waters who, working together with Stefan Seitz and Kelly Russo and with funding from the Houston Zoo Inc., did the most amazing job and brought this publication to a whole new level, improving its design and, most importantly, its scientific quality. Despite the fact that I am sure that our editorial team will miss her a great deal, we absolutely understand the reasons why Siân had to pass the torch ... after all, she is one of our most active members and has a number of other jobs within the TSG, including Co-Deputy Chair and Coordinator of the Zoo Committee! So ... without further ado, I would like to thank Siân for all her hard work putting this newsletter together over the past two years. Thank you, Siân. We are extremely grateful for all your help. Now ... the torch is with you Leo and ... I would already like to congratulate you for the great job putting your first issue together! Excellent job!!!

Moving on ... I would like to let you know that our TSG Action Planning Committee keeps working very hard towards achieving the goal of revising and updating the first version of the IUCN/SSC *Tapir Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan* (Brooks *et al.* 1997). As you will probably remember, our first step towards achieving this goal was the organization

of the Malay Tapir PHVA Workshop held in Malaysia in August 2003. A total of 35 participants from Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand, as well as TSG representatives from several other countries, produced a revised and updated Action Plan for the Malay tapir, listing and prioritizing strategies and actions for the conservation of the species. The document has been distributed to all workshop participants and other interested parties in Southeast Asia, and made available online on the TSG Website.

During the Second International Tapir Symposium held in Panama in January 2004, TSG members agreed that the next PHVA should focus on mountain tapirs. As a result, the Mountain Tapir PHVA Workshop was held in Colombia in October 2004. Approximately 70 representatives from the three mountain tapir range countries – Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru – as well as TSG officers from other countries, attended the workshop and produced a revised and updated Action Plan for the Mountain Tapir, once again, listing and prioritizing the most appropriate strategies and actions for the conservation of the species. The final report of the workshop is currently being reviewed and, as soon as it is finalized, it will be widely distributed in both Spanish and English, and made available online on the TSG Website. (For further information about the Mountain Tapir PHVA Workshop please see the article included in this issue).



The Baird's Tapir (*Tapirus bairdii*) will be the focus of the next Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA) Workshop organized by the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group (TSG). Credit William Konstant.

Considering that two of four tapir species have been the focus of the abovementioned PHVA workshops, we

can now say that we do have 50% of the second version of the Tapir Action Plan revised and updated. The next species we will focus on is the Baird's tapir, and we are currently in the process of organizing the "Baird's Tapir Conservation Workshop: Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA)", which will be held at The Belize Zoo and The Tropical Education Center (TEC), Belize, Central America, from August 15 to 19, 2005. Approximately 70 representatives, including field and captivity researchers and conservationists, representatives from governmental agencies, non-



The Belize Zoo and The Tropical Education Center are two of the main institutional supporters of the Baird's Tapir PHVA Workshop to be held in Belize, in August 2005.

governmental organizations, local and international conservation organizations, universities, research institutes, members of local communities, zoological institutions, etc., from the eight Baird's tapir range countries – Belize, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua and Panama – are expected to attend the workshop. The Tapir Specialist Group is the organization undertaking the project, and our main partner is the IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG), which will be responsible for the design and facilitation of the workshop, as well as production of workshop materials and final reports. The institutional supporters of this project are the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), The Belize Zoo & The Tropical Education Center (TEC), Belize, and Houston Zoo Inc., United States. At present, we have been able to raise approximately 63% of the funds needed to conduct this workshop. The organizations that have committed support to the meeting are the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG);

Houston Zoo Inc., USA; U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, USA; Milwaukee County Zoological Gardens, USA; XCARET Zoo, Mexico; World Association of Zoos and Aquariums (WAZA), Switzerland; Nashville Zoo, USA; Sedgwick County Zoo, USA; Bergen County Zoological Park, USA; Los Angeles Zoo, USA; San Diego Zoo, USA; Franklin Park Zoo, USA; Omaha's Henry Doorly Zoo, USA; Jacksonville Zoo and Gardens, USA; Louisiana Purchase Zoo, USA; Wuppertal Zoo, Germany; BREC's Baton Rouge Zoo, USA; Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo Conservation Fund, USA; Brevard Zoo, USA; Lee Richardson Zoo, USA; and a few private donors.

Still on the subject of action planning, I would like to mention that our TSG Country Coordinators continue to work hard on the development of our National Action Plans for Tapir Research and Conservation. Our Country Coordinators for Argentina (Silvia Chalukian), Costa Rica (Fabricio Carbonell), Ecuador (Fernando Nogales and Leonardo Ordoñez Delgado), Honduras (Nereyda Estrada) and Peru (Richard Bodmer and Jessica Amanzo) are doing an excellent job, and should have their plans finalized in time to be presented during the next Tapir Symposium in Argentina. However, we are still lacking country coordinators for Malaysia, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. If you know of any professionals or organizations that would be willing to take over these positions, please let us know as soon as possible. We would greatly appreciate any suggestions.

Speaking of TSG meetings, I would like to mention that we have decided the dates for the Third International Tapir Symposium, which will be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from January 26 to 31. The main organizers of the conference are the Tapir Specialist Group, Houston Zoo Inc., Fundación Temaikén in Argentina, AZA Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), and EAZA Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG). A small committee of TSG members sponsored by the Houston zoo traveled to Argentina in May, visited the hotel facilities, looked into the logistical aspects for the organization of the symposium in Buenos Aires, and kicked off the organization process. During the next months we will be promoting the conference, raising the necessary funds to hold it, and contacting potential speakers for our different sessions. We will make sure to keep you all posted about any developments regarding the next symposium, and we hope to see you all in Buenos Aires in January 2006!!!

Another important recent event for tapir conservation was organized by the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), in partnership with the TSG and the IUCN/SSC Pigs, Peccaries and Hippos Specialist Group. The "Lowland Tapir and White-lipped Peccary Range-Wide Priority Setting Workshop", was held in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, from April 3 to 10. The organization of this

workshop was listed as one of the priority actions included in the TSG Plans for Action 2004-2005 document produced during the Second International Tapir Symposium in Panama in January 2004. The major goals of this workshop were the establishment of a network of tapir and peccary researchers in order to facilitate information exchange and standardize research methods, assessment of the knowledge on distribution and conservation status of lowland tapirs and peccaries throughout their respective ranges, prioritization of current threats to the survival of these species across their ranges and creation of a framework to assess and alleviate these threats, and finally, the identification of priority areas for the implementation of tapir and peccary conservation efforts, prioritizing topics for further research. All tapir and peccary experts invited to attend this workshop, including all TSG Coordinators for the countries within the lowland tapir range and several TSG members, have contributed their own data and results for this process, which will be a significant step forward for the conservation of lowland tapirs and peccaries. Information and final results generated through the conduction of this workshop will be used for and included in the next version of the Lowland Tapir Action Plan.

Our TSG Committees continue to work tirelessly in putting the actions included in the TSG Plans for Action 2004-2005 into practice. I would like to highlight the excellent work done by our Zoo, Genetics and Education committees over the past six months. Siân Waters, coordinator of our Zoo Committee, is spending a lot of time and energy disseminating information about the TSG to regional zoological associations worldwide. A short article entitled "The TSG and its Relationship with Zoos" was published in *International Zoo News* at the end of 2004. The same information will also be published in the UK Zoo Federation's upcoming newsletter. EAZA News will also be publishing an article on field projects, which European zoological institutions and the TSG are supporting or coordinating. Additionally, TSG information was also sent to the AZA Communiqué, ARAZPA, SEAZA and Canadian Zoo Association. TSG members volunteered to translate the articles to both Spanish and Portuguese and they were sent to the Brazilian, Mexican, and Venezuelan Zoo Associations, as well as to the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) coordinators for Mesoamerica and Mexico.

Still on the matter of the Zoo Committee, I would like to let you know that thanks to Alan Shoemaker's incredible efficiency the "AZA Husbandry Standards For Tapirs" was modified for international use and translated into Portuguese, French and German. Additionally, the "Minimum Husbandry Standards for Tapirs", an article published by Rick Barongi in 1999,

has been translated into Spanish, Bahasa Indonesia, and Bahasa Malay (the Malaysian language). All versions for both documents are online on the TSG website and can be downloaded in PDF format. Alternatively, any TSG members or other persons interested in receiving electronic copies of these documents should contact Alan Shoemaker at sshoe@mindspring.com.

The coordinators of our Genetics Committee – Anders Gonçalves da Silva, Javier Sarria Perea, and Cristina Luís – spent the last six months shaping a new format for the "International Tapir Genetics Project", and the role of the Committee within the TSG. While on one hand the replies we got from the survey showed a wide variety of necessities, and attempts to secure direct funding for the project have so far been unsuccessful, on the other hand individual projects involving genetics of tapirs developed by researchers in and outside range countries are progressing at an amazing pace. To this effect, the emphasis of the International Project has changed into capacity building, technical advise, networking and when possible assistance in finding and securing financial support, rather than direct involvement. The committee coordinators have decided that by stimulating individual projects in range countries, these researchers might be inclined to share their results with the group, and these results could then be compiled from all or most range countries, thereby helping to define conservation priority areas as far as genetics is concerned. All information will, of course, be properly credited and researchers will actively participate in the analyses and making suggestions for recommendations. Projects currently working with the TSG Genetics Committee include Carlos Pedraza's Genetics of Mountain Tapirs in Colombia, Javier Sarría and Carlos Pedraza's Genetics of Captive Mountain Tapirs in North American Zoos, Jeffrey Ortiz's Genetics of Baird's Tapirs in Costa Rica, Anders Gonçalves da Silva and Patrícia Medici's Genetics of Lowland Tapirs in the Pontal do Paranapanema, São Paulo, Brazil, Andrés Tápias Árias' work with lowland tapirs in Ecuador, Jessica Amanzo's work with mountain tapirs in Peru, and Bengt Holst and Carl Traeholt's work with Malay tapirs in Malaysia. Furthermore, the Genetics Committee is working on their web pages, which will be included in the TSG Website. The pages will provide information about ongoing projects and Committee members, as well as guides for collection and analyses of molecular information in all three languages used by the group.

Kelly Russo, the coordinator of our Education & Outreach Committee, in conjunction with Gilia Angell, our Webmaster and coordinator of our Marketing Committee, has spent the better part of the past months working on the development of our TSG educational brochures and CD-ROM. The educational brochure will be designed in English and translated into Span-

ish, Portuguese, Bahasa Malay, and French. Printed copies of the brochure will be distributed at tapir holding zoos worldwide, and mailed to institutional partners, conservation organizations, agencies that have provided grant funding opportunities for tapir conservation projects, and range country governmental and non-governmental organizations, as well as schools, universities, local communities etc. In-country TSG Members, TSG Country Coordinators, and other contacts will help us to distribute the brochure, which will also be made available in downloadable format from the TSG Website. Additionally, Kelly has been working on our educational CD-ROM that will include tapir information and high-resolution photos for zoo exhibit graphics, and for the placement of our materials on other Websites.

Last but **DEFINITELY NOT** least, I would like to remind you all that our TSG Conservation Fund (TSGCF) continues to work on our fundraising campaigns and, most importantly, that if you would like to make a contribution to the TSGCF, **PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO DO SO!**

All you have to do is to make a check payable to the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group (TSG) and mail it to: Kelly Russo, Conservation Program Assistant, Houston Zoo Inc., 1513 North MacGregor, Houston, Texas 77030, United States. See!?! Pretty easy!!! We certainly appreciate any support and we thank you in advance!

You will be hearing from me in another six months and I am sure we will have a lot more to share!

Best wishes from Brazil,

Patrícia Medici

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TSG Committee Reports

Marketing Committee

By Gilia Angell

2004 Fundraising Campaign

In October 2004, the TSG Marketing and Fundraising Committees worked together to produce and send out 500 color brochures to individuals, zoos and other conservation organizations on our mailing list. Our letters to past contributors included notes of thanks for past support and an invitation to give again to our growing TSG Conservation Fund (TSGCF). Our printing and mailing costs were kindly underwritten by a TSG donor and the Woodland Park Zoo. Forty-eight donors responded with a total of US\$ 3,846 towards tapir conservation. Bill Konstant, Kelly Russo, and Kim LaFon at the Houston Zoo Inc. have graciously administered the fund and sent thank you letters to donors. Considering that totals from our 2003 mailing campaign were US\$ 2,394, the increase in contributions from individual donors in 2004 was 62%! Wholehearted thanks to those who generously gave to the TSG Conservation Fund in 2004. For 2005 we will conduct an online fundraising effort. Look for E-mails

about this later this year. We have many brochures left over from the mailing campaign that are available for TSG fundraising events. If you would like some for your fundraising activities, please contact Gilia Angell (gilia_angell@earthlink.net).

Tapirs in the Media

Awareness about tapirs is growing in the media recently, especially in the UK. *BBC Wildlife* magazine and photojournalist Dale Morris worked with TSG member Charles Foerster on the article aptly titled "Face to face with big nose" in the March 2005 issue. Dale Morris has generously donated his photos from this article for TSG's use on our site, in print, and marketing materials. British production company *Tiger Aspect* also contacted TSG asking for a researcher with an ongoing project suitable for filming for their documentary series "Last Chance to Save..." It was determined that Charles Foerster's project was a match and Charlie generously agreed to work with the film crew at his site. Popular British comedian Vic Reeves will host the tapir episode of this series and visited Charlie's Costa Rica site in May. Due to the celebrity endorsement aspect of this television feature, the potential is high for large media exposure to British