

FROM THE CHAIR

Letter from the Chair

By *Patrícia Medici*

It feels as if it were only yesterday that we were hosting the First Tapir Symposium in Costa Rica. As I always say, that first conference was without any doubt the moment when things started happening for the Tapir Specialist Group. Tapir researchers and conservationists from all over the world, with many different backgrounds and institutional affiliations, and doing many different types of research, had the opportunity to meet each other in person, exchange their experiences, and establish short- and long-term partnerships. After the First Symposium our TSG members became a lot more involved, and the group went through a process of growth and improvement never before seen in the history of the TSG.

The success of the First Symposium and the enthusiastic feedback we received from our participants led us to believe that we should keep holding this conference on a regular basis, and as a consequence we held the Second Symposium in 2004 in Panama, another extremely successful meeting.

Earlier this year we all got together once again for the Third International Tapir Symposium held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, from January 26 to 31. On behalf of the main organizers of our third conference, including the Tapir Specialist Group, Fundación Temaikèn, Houston Zoo Inc., American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), and European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), I would like to let you know that the conference was another very successful event of the TSG, and another landmark for our group!!! The Symposium counted with 95 participants, including tapir conservationists from 18 countries worldwide (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Peru, Spain, United Kingdom, United States, and Venezuela).

I will never have enough words to thank all the organizations and people who helped us to turn this Third Symposium into reality. The conference had the financial and/or institutional support from over 70 conservation organizations worldwide, mostly tapir holding zoological institutions in North America, Europe, Latin America and Asia. (Please see my note on the Symposium, where I include a complete list of

all our supporters). We could not be more grateful for their contributions and, most importantly, their confidence in the importance of this meeting.

During the entire process of the organization of this conference, we had the full support from our major partner on this challenge, the Fundación Temaikèn, and for that I will always remain thankful. On behalf of the TSG membership and all symposium participants, I would like to thank the entire Temaikèn staff for all their assistance in making this the best Tapir Symposium ever. It was a pleasure working with all these amazing people that make Temaikèn such a special place.

Another partner in the organization of this conference was – as always – the Houston Zoo, and for the support from these people – including Rick Barongi, Bill Konstant, Alberto Mendoza, Kelly Russo, and Jen McLain – I will always be grateful. We, the Tapir Specialist Group, are extremely lucky to have the Houston Zoo working with us and contributing their time, efforts and financial resources to make the TSG what it is today.



Fig. 1. Entrance of the Temaikèn Zoo in Escobar, Buenos Aires, Argentina, the main partner of the TSG on the organization of the Third International Tapir Symposium. Photo credit: Temaikèn.

An important event conducted during the symposium was an auction to raise funds for the TSG Conservation Fund (TSGCF). Attendees were asked to bring typical items from their home countries to sell at the silent and live auctions. We were able to raise US\$ 3,000, and these funds will be distributed in the form of small grants to tapir field and captivity conservation projects through a selective process to be conducted in August 2006.

The last session of the conference was the TSG Plans for Action 2006-2007 Workshop. The main goal of this session was evaluate what the TSG has accomplished over the past two years and carry out a new strategic planning for the group, setting short-term goals and actions for the next two years in order

to be more effective in terms of tapir conservation worldwide. Dr. Bengt Holst, an active member of the Tapir Specialist Group and Convener of the European Network of the IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG), facilitated the workshop. The final outcome of the TSG Plans for Action Workshop was a list of thirty-two (32) priority goals and one hundred and two (102) specific actions that the TSG will put into practice over the next two years (2006-2007) in order to reach the goals between now and the Fourth International Tapir Symposium to be held in April 2008. Long-term issues directly related



Fig. 2. Members of the planning committee of the Third International Tapir Symposium. From left to right: Alberto Mendoza, Manager of Latin American Initiatives, Houston Zoo, USA; Guillermo Ruiti, Jefe de Operaciones, Fundación Temaikèn, Argentina; Viviana B. Quse, Senior Veterinarian, Fundación Temaikèn, Argentina; and Patrícia Medici, Chair, TSG, Brazil.

to the conservation of the four tapir species and their habitats were not addressed during this workshop, but have been carefully discussed throughout the process of revision and updating of the first edition of the IUCN/SSC *Tapir Status Survey and Conservation Action Plan* (Brooks *et al.* 1997), which is well underway. The final version of the TSG Plans for Action 2006-2007 is already available online in downloadable format from the TSG Website and I would like to ask all TSG members and symposium participants to please review the document and let me know if you have any questions, comments, suggestions, criticisms etc. This document is extremely important for the TSG and will guide our work over the next two years. We need our entire membership to be familiar with our priority goals and actions as a group. Additionally, I would like to invite all of you to please get involved with our activities, committees, taskforces and working groups, and contribute as much as you can. Most importantly, each of the 102 actions is attached to the name of a

person responsible for completing it and we do expect that those named will step up to the task.

For further, detailed information about the conference please refer to the Third International Tapir Symposium Report included in this issue.

During the conference in Buenos Aires we made several changes to the TSG Membership. A few members were removed from the group, mostly because of lack of participation in the group's activities, and new members were added. We now have 104 members, including field researchers, educators, veterinarians, governmental agencies and NGO representatives, zoo personnel, university professors and students, from 27 different countries worldwide: Argentina, Australia, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ecuador, France, French Guiana, Germany, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Myanmar, Republic of Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Thailand, The Netherlands, United Kingdom, United States, and Venezuela.

Additionally, we made several changes in our TSG Structure. We launched our Ethics Committee, which comprises five TSG members who have kindly made themselves available, should the need for this committee arise because of inappropriate behavior by or amongst TSG members. Of course, we hope this committee will never be needed; but it is better to be prepared. We have replaced a few TSG officers: Diego J. Lizcano from the Pamplona University in Colombia, is our new Species Coordinator for Mountain Tapir; Viviana B. Quse, Senior Veterinarian at the Temaikèn Foundation in Argentina, is our new Coordinator for the TSG Zoo Committee; and Veterinarian Javier Adolfo Sarria from Colombia is our new Coordinator for the TSG Veterinary Committee.

Three Taskforces (Action Planning Implementation Taskforce; Re-Introduction/Translocation Taskforce; and Confiscated Tapirs Taskforce), and two Working Groups (Human/Tapir Conflict Working Group, and Malay Tapir Working Group) were created to deal with specific tapir conservation issues.

The Action Planning Implementation taskforce will be working hand-in-hand with the TSG Action Planning Committee. It includes all TSG Species Coordinators and a few other TSG members who will be responsible for guaranteeing that the new TSG Action Plans produced through the PHVA Workshops will be constantly reviewed and the actions fully implemented.

The Re-Introduction/Translocation taskforce is formed by a small group of TSG members and will be working in coordination with the IUCN/SSC Re-Introduction Specialist Group (RSG) on the development of tapir re-introduction and translocation guidelines. These guidelines will follow the format of those developed for non-human primates and African



Fig. 3. Group picture of participants of the Third International Tapir Symposium.

elephants and will eventually be available from the websites of both the TSG and RSG websites.

The Confiscated Tapirs taskforce will be working on the development of TSG guidelines for local wildlife authorities to make the best decisions with regards to confiscated tapirs. As more and more tapir habitat is encroached upon by local populations and international development, there will, no doubt, be more situations where the Tapir Specialist Group and local zoo and field biologists will be asked to assist in the confiscation and disposition of tapirs. See for example the article on the confiscated tapir "Lucia" in this issue of the TCN.

The Human/Tapir Conflict Working Group will be addressing the human/tapir conflict issue where it appears to be a significant problem. The first task of this group will be the development of a standard questionnaire to assess the perceived levels of crop raiding by tapirs in countries where it occurs.

The Malay Tapir Working Group was set up due to concern being expressed about the ongoing problem of the lack of research being conducted on the species over its range and the difficulties experienced in obtaining funding. The group consists of TSG members and officers currently based in Asia. The group will attempt to encourage researchers, conservation organizations, governmental institutions, and donors, to turn their attention to this endangered species.

The updated versions of both our TSG Membership and TSG Structure directories are included in this issue. Please review your name, title and details and let us know if these must be updated.

An important announcement in this issue is the launching of the TSG Virtual Library (TSGVL). This is the brainchild of our TSG member Harald Beck (Assistant Professor & Curator of the Mammal Museum of the Department of Biological Sciences, Towson University, USA), who hence becomes our Virtual Library Manager. Harald has been working on this project for almost one year and it is fantastic news that most of the published works on tapirs will be available in one website – ours!! I know of no other species or group of species that has all bibliographic references compiled and available in one site. So, this is not just a very useful website, but also pioneering conservation work! I am thoroughly excited about the TSGVL, as I am certain it will help many of us achieve our conservation and research goals. Harald makes a call to all of us to assist in completing and maintaining the TSGVL updated. Speaking on behalf of all of us members of the TSG, I would like to thank Harald for this amazing achievement. It is now up to us to use it to its full worth and keep it updated.

Also, I would like to take this opportunity to announce that the "Lowland Tapir Conservation Workshop: Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA)", our last action planning workshop, will be held in April 2007 in Sorocaba, São Paulo State, Brazil. The main organizers of this workshop will be the TSG, Sorocaba Zoo in Brazil, Houston Zoo in the United States, Brazilian Network of the IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG), and AZA and EAZA Tapir Taxon Advisory Groups (TAGs). We are already actively working on the organization

and fundraising for this meeting, which will include participants from all the lowland tapir range countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname and Venezuela). We will make sure to keep you all posted about the organization of our last PHVA Workshop.

Last but not least, we would like to remind you that the new, updated versions of the Malay, Mountain and Baird's tapirs Action Plans are available for download on the TSG Website. The Mountain Tapir and Baird's Tapir Action Plans are only available in Spanish, and we are currently looking for volunteers to translate the documents into English.

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TSG COMMITTEE REPORTS

Marketing Committee and Website

By *Gilia Angell*

The TSG Marketing Committee met in person at the Third International Tapir Symposium. Together, individuals from Colombia, Argentina, Ecuador and the United States created new marketing goals for the next two-year time frame. It became evident that the TSG website needs to reach a broader Latin American audience. Juliana Rodriguez of Colombia graciously accepted my invitation to be co-coordinator with me, and to manage the Spanish language projects. Thank you Juliana!

Some of the Marketing Committee's short term goals are shown in the following table:

Action	Purpose	Tools / Method
Create a more formal press kit for media bodies to use; this includes pictures, information blurbs etc.	To create broader, more accessible materials for media organizations To offer support to TSG members wishing to approach media	Posting on web-site, distribution of electronic copies via our FTP server or disc, adding photos submitted to photo collection
Create Spanish-language TSG mirror site	Increase accessibility to Latin American audiences	Translation of key pages on the site by committee members
With the TSG Education Committee, create a CD-ROM to distribute to country coordinators and in-situ/ex-situ educational efforts	Information about tapirs easier to understand and more accessible	
Create a children's page for the TSG site in Spanish and English	Response to a demand from web users for kids materials, the need to share materials among TSG members, and a desire to reach the „next generation of conservationists“	Collection of materials and ideas from TSG members that they have used in the field when working with kids
Secure more tapir media placements	2005 proved to be a lucrative year both in tapir awareness and in the funding support those media placements generated. This motivated new placements	Using TSG marketing materials, approach media organizations, pitch stories and spread a consistent message about tapir conservation

(Additional goals from the TSG Symposium will be posted in the Symposium Report. If you'd like to see the complete Marketing list, please contact gilia_angell@earthlink.net)

As you can see from the list above, increased media coverage of tapirs and the work of TSG is a paramount priority. For all media coverage it is important that the TSG message about tapirs is consistent. Carlos Pedraza from Colombia has translated our press kit into Spanish; it now resides on the Downloads page on the TSG site. Our press kit should help all TSG members explain what the TSG does in simple terms.