

FROM THE CHAIR

Letter from the Chair

By **Patrícia Medici**

We have done it once again – we have completed six very busy months for the Tapir Specialist Group! The list to report is long, so please bear with me...

First of all, I would like to let you know that Siân Waters has resigned her position as TSG's Co-Deputy-Chair, and on behalf of the entire TSG membership I would like to thank Siân for everything she has done for the Tapir Specialist Group. Siân will continue working with us on the coordination of the Human/Tapir Conflict and Malay Tapir working groups. We have had other changes on our group's structure so I would advice you to take a good look at our TSG Structure directory on this issue.

Several new members have joined the group over the past few months, and currently, the TSG has 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). Please see TSG Membership directory included in this issue.

I am very pleased to announce that the Final Report of the "Baird's Tapir Conservation Workshop:

Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA)" held in Belize, Central America, in August 2005, has been finalized and made available online on the TSG website. Unfortunately, this first version of the Baird's Tapir Action Plan is available only in Spanish, but we are looking for volunteers to translate this document, as well as the Mountain Tapir Action Plan developed in 2004, into English. If you have any suggestions of anyone you know that could help us with this huge task, I would appreciate hearing about them!!!

The new, updated Baird's Tapir Action Plan is available at: <http://www.tapirs.org/action-plan/action-index.html> and I would like to ask all of you to please help us distribute this action plan to all interested parties and stakeholders in your countries. We are counting on your help to guarantee that all researchers and organizations directly or indirectly involved



The lowland tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) will be the focus of the last Tapir PHVA to be held at the Sorocaba Zoo, São Paulo, Brazil, from 15 to 19 April, 2006.

PHOTO CREDIT: Patrícia Medici.

with Baird's tapir conservation in the range countries and/or with *ex-situ* programs will have access to this plan and, most importantly, will help us to put our actions into practice. We will not print the document, so the distribution process has been done via e-mail and our website. We do have a CD label ready to be used in the case you want to burn CDs and distribute them in your country. If you would like to receive the label, you just have to let me know and I will send it to you right away.

Considering that there are four tapir species, and that three of them have been the focus of previous PHVA workshops – Malay Tapir PHVA Workshop held in Malaysia in 2003, Mountain Tapir PHVA Workshop held in Colombia in 2004, and Baird's Tapir PHVA Workshop held in Belize in 2005 – we can now say that we have finalized 75% of the second version of the Tapir Action Plan, listing and prioritizing strategies and actions for the conservation of these three species and their remaining habitats.



Cover of the "Baird's Tapir Conservation Workshop: Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA)" held in Belize, Central America, in August 2005.

We are now left with one last species to work with – the Lowland Tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*). This fourth meeting – Lowland Tapir Conservation Workshop: Population and Habitat Viability Assessment (PHVA) – will be held from April 15 to 19, 2007, in the Municipality of Sorocaba, São Paulo State, Brazil. Our major partners for the organization of this workshop are the Houston Zoo Inc. in the United States, and the Sorocaba Zoo and IPÊ – Instituto de Pesquisas Ecológicas in Brazil. The IUCN/SSC Conservation Breeding Specialist Group (CBSG) Headquarters and its Brasil Network will be responsible for the design and facilitation of the workshop.

Currently, a planning committee formed by TSG members, as well as CBSG staff and local partners are working really hard to raise the necessary funds for the meeting, as well as on the invitation process and organization of the local logistics.

In terms of fundraising, the Houston Zoo Inc., as well as the AZA (American Zoo and Aquarium Association) and EAZA (European Association of Zoos and Aquaria) Tapir Taxon Advisory Groups (TAGs), have once again joined forces to conduct a major fundraising campaign targeting zoos in order to help us raise the necessary funding to make this last PHVA workshop happen. All lowland tapir holders in North America and Europe received a letter from us requesting support for the workshop. So far, we have received quite a significant number of positive responses, including eleven (11) zoos in the United States (Alexandria Zoo, Brookfield Zoo, Denver Zoo, Evansville Zoo, Houston Zoo Inc., Mesker Park Zoo, Miami Metro Zoo, San Antonio Zoo, San Diego Zoo, San Francisco, and Wildlife World Zoo), three (3) zoos in Europe (Copenhagen Zoo in Denmark, Zlin-Lesna Zoo in the Czech Republic, and Herberstein Zoo in Austria), and also a generous contribution from WAZA (World Association of Zoos and Aquariums). Needless to say, we all are very grateful for their contributions and, most importantly, for their support on making this last workshop happen!!!

This workshop has been especially difficult to organize given the fact that the geographic distribution of this tapir species covers a huge area, almost all of South America including 11 different range countries (Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, and Venezuela), from which we need to make sure to have a good representation. Approximately 200 key conservationists and organizations have been invited to attend the workshop and in the end we are expecting to have 80 participants. This process of inviting key stakeholders and building our list of participants is the most delicate part of the organization of a PHVA given the fact that we must guarantee that all key people and organizations will be present, including researchers, conservationists, representatives from NGOs and

governmental agencies, members of the local communities, research institutes, zoos, universities etc.

A smaller TSG meeting was carried out during the “VII International Congress on Wildlife Management in the Amazon and Latin America” held from September 3 to 7, 2006, in Ilhéus, Bahia, Brazil. This international conference is held every two years in Latin America and is an excellent opportunity for TSG members to meet in between Tapir Symposia. The TSG meeting in Bahia was a 6-hour session, which was initiated with a general presentation about the TSG as a whole given by myself. We then followed with a series of very good presentations about lowland tapir research and conservation in Brazil, Colombia, French Guiana, and Peru, and a final working group facilitated by TSG member Kevin Flesher who has been conducting a major project to determine and map the biogeography of lowland tapirs in the Atlantic Forest ecosystem. Kevin’s work will be extremely important in terms of generating precious information for the upcoming Lowland Tapir PHVA Workshop and we used this opportunity in Ilhéus to get as much input as we could from as many participants as possible on the current presence/absence of tapirs throughout their historical range.

Still on the subject of TSG participation in conferences and meetings, our group continues to be represented in the annual conferences of both the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) and European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA). The main idea behind attending these zoo conferences is to make sure we have the chance to meet our donors so that we can keep them informed about how we have been using their contributions and, most importantly, so that we can thank them in person! This year we had a large group of TSG members attending the AZA Conference



Alberto Mendoza, Manager of Latin America Programs of the Houston Zoo and member of the TSG, is the new Chair of the AZA Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG).
PHOTO CREDIT: Patrícia Medici.

in late September, in Tampa, Florida, and I attended the EAZA conference in the second week of October, in Madrid, Spain. During the conference in Madrid I made a presentation during the Tapir TAG meeting, which consisted of a very detailed overview of the current work of the TSG and I also made absolutely sure to acknowledge all the support we have been receiving from European zoos, support that has been growing over the years and have been critical to make some of our conservation initiatives happen.

Speaking of Tapir TAGs... I would like to announce that Alberto Mendoza, Manager of Latin American Programs of the Houston Zoo Inc. in the United States

TSG website. The ISIS database is the most complete and extensive wildlife health information source, and for a long time we wanted to make the tapir normal physiological values available to all professionals involved with tapir health investigation.

Our TSG Fundraising Committee had a busy couple of months between June and September organizing and carrying out the 2006 Funding Cycle of our TSG Conservation Fund (TSGCF). We were successful raising a considerable amount of funding during the live and silent auctions conducted during the Third International Tapir Symposium in Buenos Aires,

Cover of the September Issue of the Brazilian Nature Magazine "Terra da Gente". A 10-page tapir article written by renowned environmental journalist – Liana John – is included.



and a very active member of the TSG, is the new chair of the American Zoo and Aquarium Association (AZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG). Alberto is replacing Lewis Greene, Director of the Chaffee Zoo, who served as chair of the AZA Tapir TAG for the past three years. On behalf of the entire TSG membership I would like to thank Lewis for all his efforts to establish a strong, long-lasting partnership between the TAG and the TSG, and congratulate Alberto for his new position. We are looking forward to continuing making this partnership stronger and stronger and, most importantly, beneficial for tapir conservation as a whole.

Our TSG Veterinary Committee, now chaired by Colombian Veterinarian Javier Sarria Perea, is currently putting a lot of effort into finishing our long-awaited Tapir Veterinary Manual, which will include procedures for capture, immobilization and manipulation of tapirs in the wild, as well as details about how to collect samples for epidemiological studies, what samples to collect, how to store them, what analysis to carry out, necropsy protocols etc. Additionally, Javier has worked with ISIS – International Species Information System – in order to make the "Physiological Data Reference Values for Tapir Species" available on our

Argentina, in January, and therefore, the original idea for this year's TSGCF funding cycle was to distribute five (5) grants of US\$ 1,000 dollars. However, and to our great surprise, we received a generous donation from the Tapir Preservation Fund (TPF) – Heidi Frohring Fund – that allowed us to select a sixth proposal for funding. As you will probably remember, Heidi Frohring was a TSG member who passed away last year. Her family has been raising and donating funds to tapir conservation in memory of Heidi, and we were extremely happy to see part of this funding being used through the TSG Conservation Fund. We have no doubt whatsoever that this would have made Heidi very happy!

We received twelve (12) proposals and our reviewing committee selected six (6) of them. Each one of the six selected projects received a grant of US\$ 1,000. Selected proposals were: Conservation of Baird's Tapir in Guatemala – Manolo García, Guatemala; Population Status and Conservation of Baird's Tapir in the Zoque Forest, Mexico – Iván Lira Torres, Mexico; Determining the Presence of Andean Tapir (*Tapirus pinchaque*) in the Massif of Mamapacha (Boyacá, Colombia) – Javier Sarria Perea, Colombia; Lowland Tapir Footprint

Identification Technique (FIT) – Cristina Tófoli, Brazil; Foraging Habitat Preferences, Diet Composition, and Seed Dispersal of the Lowland Tapir (*Tapirus terrestris*) in the Interior Atlantic Forest of Paraguay – Miguel Morales, Paraguay; and Tapir Density and Habitat Use in El Rey-Centinela Conservation Unit: First Stage – Silvia Chalukian, Argentina. Congratulations Manolo, Iván, Javier, Miguel, Cristina, and Silvia! We are very



TSG member Kevin Flesher working with participants of the Tapir Workshop during the Wildlife Conservation and Management Conference held in Ilhéus, Bahia, in September 2006.
PHOTO CREDIT: Patrícia Medici.

happy to be able to help you, even if just a little bit... In fact, we cannot help it but be absolutely ecstatic about the fact that the TSG has been able to support some projects financially. This is, in my opinion, one of the major accomplishments of our group!!!

For further information about the 2006 selected projects and applicants see the article “TSG Conservation Fund 2006 Funding Cycle - Successful Applicants” in this issue. You can also find additional information on our website: <http://www.tapirs.org/tsgcf/tsgcf-projects2006.html> which also includes information about all projects funded by the TSG Conservation Fund since its establishment in 2003.

Besides conducting this year's funding cycle of the TSG Conservation Fund, our TSG Fundraising Committee has finalized our official list of tapir projects endorsed by the TSG. The main idea behind the creation of the TSG List of Endorsed Projects was to have a menu of tapir projects that funding agencies could review and select the ones that fit their interests. We started working on this list last year when we requested all our TSG members and other tapir researchers to send us abstracts of their tapir projects, as well as general information about the budgets, including the annual and total cost of the project, how much funding

has been secured, and how much is still pending.

The final result is a comprehensive list of 55 tapir projects, including 13 projects on Baird's tapirs (Belize – 2, Colombia – 1, Costa Rica – 3, Ecuador – 1, Guatemala – 1, Honduras – 1, Mexico – 3, and Panama – 1); 23 projects on lowland tapirs (Argentina – 9, Bolivia – 2, Brazil – 6, Colombia – 1, Ecuador – 2, French Guiana – 1, Paraguay – 1, and Peru – 1); 12 projects on mountain tapirs (Colombia – 7, Ecuador – 3, and Peru – 2); 3 projects on Malay tapirs (Indonesia – 1, Malaysia – 1, and Myanmar – 1); and 4 general projects including more than one species or international initiatives.

The TSG List of Endorsed Projects is available online on the TSG website (<http://www.tapirs.org/projects/index.html>) and will be soon distributed to potential funding sources, including zoos in North America, Europe, Latin America and Asia, as well as conservation organizations and other funding institutions. For a researcher, having the project information on this list means that it will get excellent exposure with potential funding opportunities for his/her tapir conservation initiatives. The list has been used by several funding agencies already. Besides the list of endorsed projects, we also have available on our website our TSG Project Endorsement Guidelines in English, Spanish and Portuguese.

Additionally, the TSG Fundraising Committee is currently discussing the development of a list of “Top Ten Tapir Conservation Projects”, very much in the same way the Primate Specialist Group developed a list of 25 most endangered primates. This idea is listed as a priority action on our TSG Strategic Planning for 2006-2007 and comes from our need to focus our fundraising efforts to raise funds for priority projects. The list will be a living directory which will be re-evaluated every two years during the Tapir Symposium.

Another major piece of good news is the recent publication of a 10-page article on tapirs on the very well known Brazilian nature magazine called “Terra da Gente”. The article was written by one of the most respected environmental journalists in Brazil – Liana John – and explored not only lowland tapirs, the species that occurs in Brazil, but also the other three tapir species, as well as projects being carried out worldwide, conservation initiatives in general and, most importantly, the work of the Tapir Specialist Group. The article has generated a huge feedback to the TSG in Brazil and has provided high exposure to the tapir conservation cause. We would like to thank Liana for an amazing piece of work! The article is available online on the TSG website in PDF format.

If you visit our website regularly you probably noticed that we have finally made ALL previous versions of our *Tapir Conservation* newsletter since 1990 available for download! All the issues of the newsletter

published before 2002 were still in printed format in our personal libraries and had to be scanned and converted into PDF in order to be made available on the website. So... if you are curious to learn what the TSG was up to during the 1990's make sure to check it out at <http://www.tapirs.org/Downloads/tsg-newsletter.html>

And last but MOST DEFINITELY NOT LEAST... I would like to announce that our TSG Virtual Library is finally ONLINE!!! The creation and establishment of this library was also included as one of the priority actions on our TSG Strategic Planning 2006-2007 and was one of our major tasks for 2006!!!

Once the idea of the virtual library was conceived, it was put into practice through a joint volunteer project of the TSG and the Botanical Research Institute of Texas (BRIT) in the United States. The project was spearheaded by TSG member Harald Beck, who put together a group of students to initiate the development of the library and the compilation of literature, and kept us all on track for launching this database quickly. TSG member Mathias Tobler joined the effort a few months later and introduced us to the BRIT virtual library system, which we decided to adopt. Jason Best and Anton Weber from BRIT, as well as our TSG Webmaster Gilia Angell and our TSG Server Administrator Benjamin Leblond, were other fundamental collaborators of this project... and all I can say to all of them is a big, fat THANK YOU!

The TSG Virtual Library aims to make available all published literature on the four species of tapirs. Right now, the library includes over 500 tapir bibliographical references including scientific articles, book chapters, BS / M.Sc. / Ph.D. Dissertations etc. all in PDF format. All the literature that was already available online from different virtual libraries around the world was downloaded, and all bibliography we had in printed format in our own personal collections was scanned and converted into PDF. After all this very time-consuming work, we do believe it is safe to assume that we have been able to collect just about EVERYTHING ever published about tapirs and that our Virtual Library is THE most amazing collection of tapir information, which is now available for download from the TSG website absolutely for free!!!

All users may browse article references and abstracts by searching by keyword. However for now, only TSG members will have an account and will be able to download full articles. At the moment we are seeking permissions from publishers in order to avoid copyright problems, and once this issue is taken care of, we will be able to make the library available to any visitors of the TSG website.

We aim to make the TSG Virtual Library a constantly updated and robust resource for tapir researchers and those interested in accessing published studies



Harald Beck from Germany and Mathias Tobler from Switzerland... the two men behind the creation of the TSG Virtual Library.

PHOTO CREDITS: William Konstant (Mathias Tobler's photo) and Harald Beck (Harald Beck's photo).

and articles on tapirs which are often difficult to obtain in hard copy. For this reason, we would appreciate your help in keeping our library updated. We would like to ask all of you to please take some time to go through the library at <http://atrium.tapirs.org/> and make sure we have all tapir literature available. If you notice we are missing an article, a dissertation or any other type of tapir literature, please make sure to let us know. Please let us know if you have any additional tapir-related articles to add. And if you publish something about tapirs, please let us know as soon as possible and send us a copy of your publication. It is very important that all of us work together to keep this library constantly up to date.

Enjoy the library! We strongly believe that the establishment of this library is A MAJOR accomplishment of the Tapir Specialist Group and we hope this new tool will be very useful for our tapir conservation efforts!

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