

## FROM THE CHAIR

## Letter from the Chair

By *Patrícia Medici*

It is a pleasure to announce that we are well on our way in the process of organizing the upcoming **Fourth International Tapir Symposium** that will be held at Parque XCARET in Playa del Carmen, Cancún, Mexico, from April 26 to May 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008.

The First International Tapir Symposium held in Costa Rica in 2001 brought together for the very first time 85 tapir experts and conservationists from 21 different countries worldwide. For the Second International Tapir Symposium, held in Panama in 2004, we had the participation of 90 representatives from 19 countries. The last conference, the Third International Tapir Symposium held in Argentina in 2006, included 100 tapir conservationists from 25 countries. The TSG's International Tapir Symposium has proved to be a critical occasion for tapir conservation worldwide, promoting the perfect opportunity and atmosphere to exchange ideas and experiences, and to foster our global network of tapir researchers and supporters. The Fourth International Tapir Symposium will once again bring together a multi-faceted group of tapir experts and conservationists, including field biologists, environmental educators, captivity specialists, academics, researchers, veterinarians, governmental authorities, politicians and other interested parties.

Specific topics discussed during the symposium will be tapir field research and conservation, population and habitat management, re-introductions and translocations, husbandry and captive management, environmental education and outreach, training and capacity-building, involvement of local communities, marketing, fundraising, governmental regulations and permits, veterinary issues, human-tapir conflicts and many other issues. The first part of the conference will feature paper and poster presentations by tapir researchers and keynote speakers, and the second part will be devoted to workshops and round-tables addressing specific topics relevant to tapir conservation. All sessions will be conducted in English and simultaneously translated to Spanish.

A very important session to be carried out during the conference in Mexico is the TSG Strategic Planning Workshop, during which we will review and evaluate what was accomplished of our Strategic Plan for 2006-2007 that was developed and prioritized during the

Third Symposium in Argentina, and formulate a new Strategic Plan for 2008-2010.

Last but not least, the Fourth Symposium will provide a unique opportunity to establish and structure a Tapir Action Plan Implementation Taskforce to oversee the implementation of the recently finalized 2007 version of the IUCN/SSC Tapir Action Plan. The main role of this taskforce will be to promote and support the plan throughout tapir range countries in Central and South America, and Southeast Asia, and help it reach all possible stakeholders. Our new Tapir Action Plan is a "living document", which will be constantly reviewed, updated and adapted according to evolving and emerging tapir conservation needs. Additionally, we will provide support for any initiatives aiming to implement



**Members of the Fourth International Tapir Symposium planning committee during visit to Parque XCARET in Mexico in August 2007. From left to right: Alan Shoemaker, Efrain Castillo, Alberto Mendoza, and Patrícia Medici.**

actions, including technical assistance, help with proposal development and fundraising and political lobbying. The progress made in implementing the plan will be evaluated every three years during the International Tapir Symposium.

The main partners on the organization of the Fourth International Tapir Symposium are the IUCN/SSC Tapir Specialist Group (TSG), Parque XCARET in Mexico, Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TSG), European Association of Zoos and Aquaria (EAZA) Tapir Taxon Advisory Group (TAG), and Copenhagen Zoo, Denmark. Members of the symposium's planning committee – Patrícia Medici, Alberto Mendoza, and Alan Shoemaker – visited Cancún in August 2007. We had a series with meetings with XCARET's General Manager – Eduardo Briones – and Director of Animal Collections – Efrain Rios Castillo – as well as with the owner of the facility, the architect

Miguel Quintana Pali, who committed the resources of their entire staff to assist the TSG in organizing, promoting and conducting this conference.

XCARET is one of the finest zoological organizations in Latin America and the park will provide excellent infra-structure and local logistics for our conference. XCARET is located on the Caribbean, one of the most beautiful coastal regions in the world. It is also surrounded by significant Mayan historical sites. Access to the region is very easy via direct and often non-stop flights to Cancún, a major tourist destination in Latin America. For further information about XCARET, please visit their website at: [www.xcaret.com](http://www.xcaret.com). Symposium sessions will be carried out at XCARET and participants will be staying at the Hotel Allegro **Occidental** in Playa del Carmen ([www.occidentalhotels.com/allegroplayacar/index.asp](http://www.occidentalhotels.com/allegroplayacar/index.asp)). A list of other options for alternative hotels will be made available at a later stage, including contact information and websites so that participants can make their own reservations.

Currently, the symposium organizing committee has been working non-stop to put this conference together! We are carrying out a major campaign to raise the necessary funds for the conference, as well as organizing the local logistics with XCARET, booking local services, contacting speakers and putting together the conference program. Registration for the symposium is available online at: <http://tapirs.org/symposium/registration.html>. We will soon be ready to send out a call for abstracts for oral presentations and posters.

We are confident that this is going to be another extremely successful event of the Tapir Specialist Group and we would like to invite all of you to be with us in Cancún! Make sure to put the Fourth International Tapir Symposium on your schedule for 2008!

On another note, our Marketing Coordinator and Webmaster Gilia Angell continues to work hard to raise the profile of the Tapir Specialist Group. Our website, [tapirs.org](http://tapirs.org) was selected by *Science Magazine* as its October 15 "Netwatch" website. Each month, *Science* features a website it finds particularly interesting and unique among science-related sites. Congratulations to all of you for your document, news, interview, article, writing, and photo contributions to our site! Our combined content contributions to [tapirs.org](http://tapirs.org) make it what it is today: a destination for information about tapirs and tapir conservation. See a printout of the article here: <http://www.tapirs.org>

Additionally, Gilia worked with Canon and National Geographic photographer Joel Sartore earlier this year to successfully pitch the Lowland tapir for the December issue of *National Geographic*! Each month in *National Geographic Magazine* & Canon Cameras features an endangered animal in its advertisement. The ad describes the animal, the threats to it and invi-

tes readers to find out more at [ngm.com/canonwildlife](http://ngm.com/canonwildlife). Please visit our website to download the ad: <http://tapirs.org/index.html>

Our photo collection in the TSG website continues to grow. We have fielded inquiries about photo usage and sold a number of photos (including the one seen in *Science Magazine*) -- all proceeds benefiting the TSG's Conservation Fund. As always, we invite all of you to send us your very best high resolution photos of tapirs in the wild and/or in captivity to add to our collection of fundraising photography: <http://tapirs.org/img/picture-collection/>

This issue of *Tapir Conservation* includes articles from some of our TSG Country Coordinators reporting on their progress on the development of National Action Plans for Tapir Conservation. As you will see, we are well on our way in the process of developing National Plans for tapir conservation in all range countries.

Still on the subject of action planning, I would like to let you all know that the VORTEX VPJ files developed during the PHVA Workshops for all four tapir species will be made available online on the TSG Website very soon. These VPJ files are baseline models for tapir population modeling. Computer modeling is a valuable and versatile tool for assessing risk of decline and extinction of wildlife populations. Complex and interacting factors that influence population persistence and health can be explored, including natural and anthropogenic causes. Models can also be used to evaluate the effects of alternative management strategies to identify the most effective conservation actions for a population or species and to identify research needs. Computer modeling using the simulation software package VORTEX has been used in all four actions plans developed by the TSG over the past five years.

Tapirs are distributed across different ecosystems where they face various levels types of threats. VORTEX models can be extremely useful to assess these threats and the potential threshold at which the threat may cause extinction of the tapir population. As a result, having access to these VPJ files will allow tapir conservationists willing to model their tapir populations all throughout the world to do so.

Another exciting piece of good news is that all SSC Specialist Group Chairs will be getting together from February 11 to 14 in Al-Ain, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates (UAE). I will attend this important meeting and represent the Tapir Specialist Group. This gathering will enable all SG Chairs to share the successes and challenges of their Specialist Groups, allowing us to understand more about the role we have within the Species Survival Commission and IUCN. We will also have the opportunity to contribute to SSC's plans, share new approaches, make important contacts, discuss topical issues (like restructuring, fund-raising

and policy formulation), and meet the SSC Steering Committee and some of the Species Programme Staff face-to-face. I will report on the results of this meeting in the next issue of Tapir Conservation.

As a final note, I would like to ask you to please note my new contact information below. I am now based in Corumbá, Mato Grosso do Sul State, in the very heart of the Brazilian Pantanal. After twelve years working on lowland tapirs in the Atlantic Forests of São Paulo State, I am now expanding my reach and establishing a Lowland Tapir Conservation Initiative all throughout Brazil. The first step will be the establishment of a long-term lowland tapir research and conservation project here in the Pantanal biome ... and from here we will move forward to the Amazon, Cerrado and any other biomes where our tapir conservation efforts will be needed!

Come and visit us in the Pantanal!

But before that ... see you all in Mexico in a few months!

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## NATIONAL ACTION PLAN REPORTS

### Plan de Acción Danta – Costa Rica

*Por Fabricio Carbonell T.*

#### Introducción

Una vez concluido el taller para PHVA en Belice, en el 2005, nos propusimos elaborar un Plan de Acción para Costa Rica. A ese fin, se planificó un taller nacional en noviembre de ese mismo año donde se invitó a varias personas para tratar este importante tema. Debido a las limitaciones de tiempo (1 sólo día), al final se obtuvo una lista de elementos a tomar en cuenta en un segundo taller, y acciones que se podrían empezar a desarrollar.

En este taller nacional (apoyados por la Unión Mundial para la Conservación de la Naturaleza, Oficina Regional para Mesoamérica (UICN-ORMA)) se destacaron algunas diferencias de trabajo con respecto al PHVA en Belice. Por ejemplo:

- En Costa Rica se invitó a participar a pobladores locales, algo que no podría haberse hecho en el taller de Belice. Así, los lineamientos generales de Belice son adaptados a la realidad local de Costa Rica al invitar a participar a todas las personas e instituciones involucradas en la conservación del tapir.

- En el taller de Belice, las ciencias de la conservación biológica y la biología determinaron las líneas de trabajo. En Costa Rica los temas fueron determinados por los participantes.
- En Belice las principales líneas de trabajo para la conservación de la especie fueron:
  - 1.) Manejo de Hábitat (ordenamiento territorial);
  - 2.) Manejo de Poblaciones Silvestres;
  - 3.) Impactos Humanos y Educación;
  - 4.) Biología de Población y Evaluación de Riesgos; (modelos) y
  - 5.) Manejo ex-Situ (en cautiverio).
- Para el caso de Costa Rica, fueron:
  - 1.) Conocimiento científico,
  - 2.) Sensibilización y Educación Ambiental,
  - 3.) Conocimiento integral no formal, y
  - 4.) Manejo y Gestión del hábitat (ordenamiento territorial)

#### Plan de Acción

Con los elementos descritos, los asistentes definieron metas para cada uno. A continuación presento un resumen de los principales avances.

##### **1. Conocimiento científico:**

Se ha avanzado mucho con respecto al estudio de la biología del tapir en el pasado. Los principales aportes han sido de Charles Foerster en Corcovado (1994-hasta hoy), Juan de Dios Valdez en Corcovado (2004-5), Feng Mei, estudios en el Parque Nacional Volcán Barba (2004-5), Olivier Chassot et al en la zona norte en la nueva Reserva de la Biosfera Agua y Paz (2005). Antes de estos trabajos se investigó en el Parque Nacional