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The Bear Conservation Fund

of the
International Association for Bear Research and Management (IBA)

Conserving the world's bears through science and collaboration

Annual Report 2007—2008

The Bear Conservation Fund

supporting research, exchange,
& collaboration
in bear conservation
around the world

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*IBA is a volunteer organization. Donations to the
Bear Conservation Fund are not subject to overhead;
all funds go directly to programs*

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From the Chair

I had the chance to spend time in the field this year in northern Peru with one of our 2008 Research & Conservation grant recipients. How gratifying. Like so many other projects we have supported, this one exemplifies the high yield for modest investment that we like to see. This project is producing new scientific information that is directly relevant to conservation. It relies on, and in return strengthens cooperative relationships with local people and communities. By employing and training local staff and reaching out to schools and community groups, it lays the foundation for building effective local advocacy for bears living in a challenging desert environment, facing threats from human exploitation, agricultural encroachment, and new mining activity. IBA's professional and financial support have been fundamental in solidifying direction for this project.



Andean Bear : Robyn Appleton

Also gratifying this year has been the broadening base of support for the Bear Conservation Fund (BCF). Five zoological societies donated money for "in-situ" (in-the-wild) studies on species of particular interest to them. Individual donor numbers increased, and we benefited from the first full-year input of investment proceeds from Homer's (IBA managed) Bear Conservation Fund. On the giving side, we broadened the impact of our dollars through partnerships with Conservation International, Wildlife Conservation Society, Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh, and others. We will continue to pursue more partnerships in 2008-2009.

A challenge facing all non-profits in the coming months is, of course, the volatile state of current financial markets. Fund managers circle to protect their core investments. We will concentrate our outreach on reaching increasing numbers of individual donors to keep the BCF growing and vital.

Karen Noyce , Chair





New partnerships increase BCF's reach

Benefactors

IBA's 2008 grant programs were funded by all donations to the BCF received between March 2007 and February 2008. The year saw a significantly more diverse group of donors than previous years. IBA's original grants program was initially made possible in the 1990's, and was funded entirely by the John Sheldon Bevins Memorial Foundation. In 2007-2008, three additional sources of funds each provided similar levels of support (Table 1):

- Homer's Bear Conservation Fund (an IBA donor-directed fund) provided proceeds from its first full year of investment.
- For the first time, 5 zoos and zoo associations provided over \$10,000 to the BCF. Zoo associations are taking on increasing responsibility to move beyond captive husbandry and invest resources in conservation of species "in-situ", particularly those species featured in their zoological parks. By contributing to BCF many zoos increase the impact of their modest investment by pooling it with others and letting IBA's professional review team determine high-priority, cost effective studies to support.
- Individuals and family foundations donated approximately 25% of BCF dollars this year. We expect this number to continue to increase.

Beneficiaries

Other wildlife conservation organizations are increasingly recognizing IBA and the BCF as valuable partners in reaching their goals. Grant recipients in the past 2 years have included researchers working for leading organizations like Conservation International (see page 5) Wildlife Conservation Society, and a variety of other non-governmental organizations and universities.

Particularly exciting is the increasing cooperation between IBA and the IUCN Bear Specialist Group (BSG). Last year, IBA voted to give BSG chairs a formal advisory role in grant review, providing the review committee with extra perspective on global project priorities. Moreover, BSG will henceforth benefit directly from Bear Conservation Fund dollars. Undesignated gifts to the BCF (these are gifts that donors do not ear-mark for particular programs) are split three ways, with 85% for Research and Conservation grants and 10% for Experience and Exchange Grants. Until now, the remaining 5% has supported Publications Outreach, which underwrites the cost of providing IBA's newsletter and journal, *Ursus*, to biologists without funds for accessing publications. This outreach now has other support, so henceforth that 5% of BCF donations will provide a small "Action Account" to fund targeted actions by the BSG when special need arises. See page 3 for an example of the type of action this might support. These are the first dedicated funds that the BSG has received for conservation work.

Thanks to All Donors for 2008 Programs

Including:

John Sheldon Bevins Memorial Fund

Homer's Bear Conservation Fund

San Diego Zoological Society

Lowry Park Zoo

WAZA (World Association of Zoos and Aquaria)

Iaon Jones

Osher Trust

Marilyn Lummis

Koelner Zoo

Little Rock Zoo

Robt A. Johnston Fndn

Tanya Rosen and friends

Joshua Pierce

Matson's Lab

Alan Brody

Russ Van Horn

John Axtell

Table 1. BCF Funding Sources

BCF Funding Sources, March 2007 – February 2008	
Bevins Fund	\$ 17,500 *
Homer Fund	17,500
Individual donors	15,818
Zoo Associations	10,064
Total	\$ 60,882
* 15% earmarked for conference travel grants	

Table 2. Disbursement of Funds to Programs

Total Donations		Program Allocation				
Received	Program year	Total \$	Research & Conservation Grants	Experience & Exchange Grants	Publications Outreach	Conference Travel Grants
1 March 2004 – 28 Feb 2005	2005	\$47,074	\$40,575*	\$3874	\$0	\$2625
1 March 2005 – 28 Feb 2006	2006	\$88,100	\$80,700**	\$6000	\$2500	\$2250***
1 March 2006 – 28 Feb 2007	2007	\$55,350	\$51,528	\$615 **	\$207	\$3000***
1 March 2007 – 28 Feb 2008	2008	\$60,882	\$55,640	\$2500	\$732	\$2625****

*Unused funds returned from 2004 increased total dollars available for R&C Grants to \$54,042 in 2005.
**IBA contributed an additional \$3350 from its general treasury to bring total grants funds to \$83,700 for 2006.
***IBA contributed matching funds for conference travel grants, bringing totals for grants to \$4500, and \$6000 in 2005 and 2006.

Looking for bears in Bangladesh

In March, 2008, Dr. Anwar Islam, director of the Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh, received an \$8900 IBA grant to launch an ambitious project to assess current distribution of 3 species of bears (sun bears, Asiatic black bears, and sloth bears) across Bangladesh. Without an understanding of where bears remain in the country and habitat conditions for bears, attempts to prioritize and focus conservation efforts for each species could have little meaning.

During the review process for Dr. Islam's project, however, a concern with the proposal had arisen. Useful assessment of bear presence in an area requires the ability to accurately differentiate between bear sign left by different bear species. For the survey to produce meaningful results, acquiring good training for the dozens of survey participants would be essential.

A suggestion from the Bear Specialist Group provided a perfect solution. Rob Steinmetz, of Thailand, co-chair of the BSG's expert team on sun bears, has spent many years conducting bear surveys across Thailand, where 2 of the same bear species overlap in range. In doing so, he developed a field-tested system for distinguishing between species based on sign. With a little creativity, the grants committee was able to free up a little extra money to send Steinmetz to Bangladesh as a complement to the grant, thereby assuring that survey participants received the best possible preparation for conducting their new survey.

Steinmetz's training workshops were a great success, with over 50 forestry officials and technical staff from



Training Workshop Participants, Bangladesh: Rob Steinmetz



Sun Bear: Annette Olsson

Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh attending. Participants practiced sign transects in the field, sign identification, recognition of bear food species, and conducting village interviews. Rob says, "Dr Islam is a remarkable hard-working conservation biologist ...I enjoyed working with him and his team immensely. We found real bear signs in the hills along the Indian border....that drew great excitement from the trainees....It appears that bear populations are contiguous with populations in India, ...an important link to maintain".

Rob and the team designed a plan to survey the country using a combination of sign transects and village interviews. They initiated communication with colleagues in Indian and Burma about transboundary cooperation. Wildlife Trust will continue the work and Rob will help advise from Thailand.





Proceeds from San Diego Zoo's Bear Awareness Days Benefit Bear Conservation Fund

In 2007 and again in 2008, the San Diego Zoo donated proceeds from their annual Bear Awareness Days to the Bear Conservation Fund. The 2007 gift of over \$4000 funded Research and Conservation Grants in 2008; this year's gift of over \$14,000 will support IBA's 2009 grants.

The Zoological Society of San Diego is a conservation, education, and recreation organization that operates not only the San Diego Zoo, but also one of the largest zoo-

based research centers in the world. The Society is dedicated to preserving and protecting rare and endangered wildlife and habitats. The Zoo hosts its annual Bear-Awareness Days as part of ongoing efforts to educate people about endangered species and habitats.

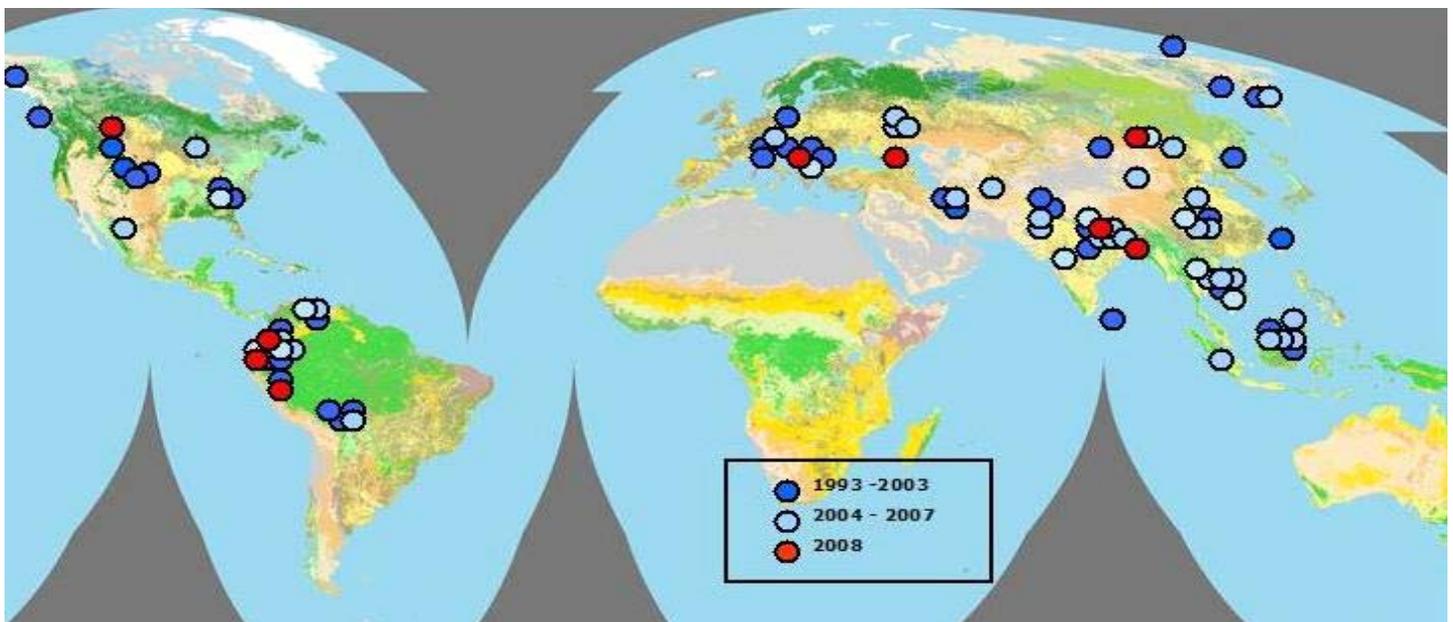
Bear Awareness Days provides an opportunity for Zoo guests to meet face to face with bear keepers and researchers and learn about "bear essentials," including natural history, the individual "personalities" of the zoo's bears, and also what the San Diego Zoo is doing for bear conservation around the world. This year's featured species at the May 2008 Bear Awareness Days was the polar bear. Zookeepers demonstrated the use of various enrichment items, like gunny-sack "play buddies" for the polar bears, and created an iced-over "polar bear plunge" for the event. Fund-raising activities included an auction for behind-the-scenes tours of the zoo and for one-of-a-kind paw "paintings" by some of the zoo's ursine inhabitants.

The zoo and research center conduct numerous studies involving both captive animals and wild populations. However, their new partnerships with IBA and with Polar Bears International extend the reach of their programs and provide a channel for delivering much needed funds to other bear conservation efforts.



Polar bear with play buddy: *Courtesy of San Diego Zoo*

Locations of projects receiving BCF-funded IBA Research and Conservation Grants since 1993



Looking for bears in Cambodia

An experienced team of young Cambodian field biologists have helped bring national awareness to the conservation needs of Cambodian bears. Project director Annette Olsson, a Danish biologist working for Conservation International, found her niche conducting species-focused research and conservation projects in Cambodia about 5 years ago. From the start, she recognized that bears were among the species most in need of attention. With support from the Bear Conservation Fund and IBA, Olsson assembled a team that has now documented the current distribution and relative abundance of both Asiatic black bears and sun bears in many parts of Cambodia. As a result of their surveys, they have identified areas best suited for immediate conservation actions and others with potential value for bears. They have launched a national bear education program and initiated a reintroduction program for the many bears confiscated from illegal traders.

Olsson reports: *“Bear hunting in Southeast Asia is extremely prevalent and there are very few conservation efforts specifically focusing on in situ bear protection. Many populations of U. thibetanus and H. malayanus have already gone extinct, or are reduced to ‘living dead’ populations. We have definitely raised the awareness of bear conservation both within the government and civil society in Cambodia. Many of the protected areas are putting more focus on illegal hunting of bears and other species now, and I believe that at least at some sites such as the Cardamom Mountains we*

have reached the local communities and are working with them to prevent hunting. The funding from IBA has meant everything to our work. Without this support we wouldn't have gotten the project off the ground to begin with.”

Olsson has seen positive results from the awareness campaign that included magazine and newspaper articles, a television documentary, and visits to schools. These things have helped inform the populace and raise concern about the threats to bear populations when hunting is uncontrolled and bear parts are valued for food and medicine.

Olsson emphasizes the importance of training and education; the skilled wildlife team she assembled now focuses on monitoring a number of indicator species in addition to bears. The team will continue to carry out transect-based surveys on a yearly basis to monitor changes in the status of these species and in the general environment at key locations in the country. She would like to see monitoring of bear populations continued throughout the country on an ongoing basis. She also hopes to increase advocacy for strengthening law enforcement capacity at the border between Cambodia and Vietnam, where most smuggling of wildlife occurs.

Olsson received her MSc in zoology/ecology at the University of Copenhagen. From there she went to Tanzania and Madagascar for two years, but jumped at the chance to work for CI in Cambodia, where she now makes her home.



Annette Olsson



Cambodian bear survey team at work : Annette Olsson



Bear education in Cambodia: Annette Olsson

IBA





Research and Conservation Grants awarded for 2008

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status of declining brown bear populations in Northern Mongolia Dr. B. Lhagvasuren 	\$ 7,000	2nd year
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ecology and abundance of Andean bears in the tropical dry forests of northern Peru: seasonal water sources as research opportunities R. Appleton 	8,000	new
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Baseline survey of bears in Bangladesh Dr. Anwarul Islam, Wildlife Trust of Bangladesh 	8,900	new
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bear survey and community-based bear conservation in the Manasalu Conservation Area, Nepal Achyut Aryal and Dr. Sanat Kumar Dhungel 	8,000	new
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserving Andean bears on private lands in the Ecuadorian Andes B. Zug and Alfredo Martinez, Fundación Cordillera Tropical 	5000	new
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grizzly bear response to encroaching development in the foothills of Alberta Bogdan Cristescu and Dr. Mark Boyce 	4,970	new
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Status of brown bears (<i>Ursus arctos</i>) in Albania and FYROM A. Karamanlidis and A. Zedrosser 	4,500	new
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building capacity to survey and monitor Andean bears in Colombia Robert Marquez and Padu Franco 	5,225	new
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey of taxonomy and population structure of brown bears in Georgia Marine Murtskhvaladze 	3,000	new

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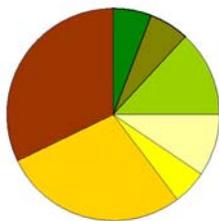
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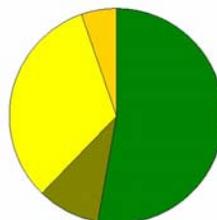
2008 GRANTS ALLOCATION



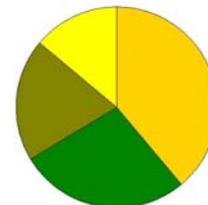
By Species

- Sun bear
- Sloth bear
- Asiatic black bear
- Brown bear (N.Amer)
- Brown Bear (Europe)
- Brown Bear (Asia)
- Andean bear

By Continent



- Asia
- North America
- South America
- Europe



By Project Type

- Population Assessment
- Ecological Research
- Education/ Training
- Program Implementation

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