Dear Donors,

Thank you for your support in our 2014 and 2015 funding cycle. Enclosed you will see the results of your dollars at work in our Annual Report for the Bear Conservation Fund in 2015. I hope you are gratified and proud of what is being accomplished through your generosity.

2015 was another good year. Together, we raised $71,100 for Research and Conservation Grants (RCG) to fund 11 projects. These include 2 grants on polar bears in Canada and the USA, 3 grants on Asiatic black bears in China, Pakistan and Japan, ongoing funding for last year’s sun bear grant in Laos, PDR, and 6 grants supporting brown bear research in Russia, Canada, the USA, and Romania.

Your dollars funded a very interesting experience and exchange grant that created a workshop for students to better understand sloth bear-human conflict in India.

Your dollars helped fund William McShea’s and Dave Garshelis’s study on Asiatic black bears that has broad implications for bear bile farming and poaching of wild bears in China. The Chinese government believes that such farming reduces poaching of wild bears. This study will test this hypothesis, and most importantly, set up Asiatic black bear monitoring in the country so that all will know the true status of this bear. If farming fuels the poaching of wild bears, or their numbers are shown to be declining, the Chinese government will have grounds to regulate and downgrade this practice.

The projects funded in the US and Canada work towards development of research techniques that will serve bears in the long haul and across continents. Elizabeth Flaherty’s project develops a system to estimate body condition and size of polar bears utilizing specialized cameras in addition to an evaluation of old photographs. Rachel Wheat is checking out salmon...
carcasses as an inexpensive, readily obtainable source of bear DNA. Finally, Eric Spilker & Evelyn Merrill are pioneering the use of scat detection dogs to evaluate predator-to-predator interactions in the Rockies. Here again, both the techniques and the results of this study will have broad implications for bear conservation going in the near future.

Mark Dittmer’s project we funded in 2014 on the use of drones in bear research was featured in national and international media. Here’s a link: https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/energy-environment/wp/2015/08/13/drones-could-be-stressing-out-wildlife-scientists-suggest/

There were no projects funded on panda bears or Andean bears with this set of proposal submissions. Sloth bears were represented in our exchange grant. Research and conservation grants (RCG) are awarded on both scientific merit and conservation value. Through our RCG committee’s advocacy and help from the IUCN Bear Specialist Group which advises our grant-making, we expect these other species to have good representation in our awards in the years to come. 2016’s proposals include 4 for Andean bears, 3 for sloth bears and one for sun bears.

Next year in June of 2016, the 24th International Conference on Bear Research and Management will be held in my home town of Anchorage, Alaska. I’m on the organizing committee. If you would like to learn more about bears and see the magnificence of Alaska in its prime summer beauty, then consider joining us at the conference. We have events and lectures planned for the public in addition to the scientific conference. Our keynote speaker is Richard Nelson and our conference topic is “Learning from the Past to Inform the Future.”

It has always been my pleasure to show guests our great state and if you want to be here for the conference, please contact me so that I can help you arrange the best possible visit. My husband chuckled when we discussed this. He said I could legitimately write “for a good time, call Julia at 907-223-3483.” The conference website can be found here: http://www.cvent.com/events/24th-international-conference-on-bear-research-and-management/

As for our challenges, Paolo Ciucci, our Research and Conservation Grants Committee chair, reports although we funded 11 studies, there were 25 proposal submissions for a total request of $170,100. That means that more than half our submissions were refused, four of which were strong proposals worthy of
research dollars. He said “It was difficult to be unable to offer grants to these applicants in the final analysis.” In 2016 we have 24 proposal submissions covering 7 of the 8 bear species for a total request of $180,000. The challenge is to fund all worthy requests.

Many thanks to you who are long-term donors. Your generosity has helped shape the world of the human-wild bear interface, mainly through the fostering of young scientists and who build careers and remain staunch advocates for bears and for the wild lands that support them. This is capacity-building in its best sense.

By being a benefactor to bears you create reasons for optimism. There is power in continuity and steady support. Please consider an annual gift to the Bear Conservation Fund. Thank you for your wisdom and generosity in supporting the Bear Conservation Fund. With many thanks,

Julia Bevins  
907-223-3483 | BCF@bearbiology.com

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and other generous donors who wish to remain anonymous

The Bear Conservation Fund is pleased to announce a new legacy donor for 2015, long time IBA member Patti Sowka.

* a donor-advised internal endowment

This donor list reflects the 2014-2015 funding cycle ending February 14, 2015.
ABOUT US

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

The International Association for Bear Research and Management (IBA) is a non-profit 501.c3 tax-exempt organization open to professional biologists, wildlife managers, and others dedicated to the conservation of all 8 bear species. The organization has over 550 members from over 50 countries. It supports the scientific management of bears by funding research and distributing scientific information. The IBA sponsors international conferences on all aspects of bear biology, ecology, and management, supporting face-to-face networking and exchange of current information. The IBA also publishes Ursus, a journal of peer-reviewed scientific papers.

IBA Mission Statement Goal: The goal of the International Association for Bear Research and Management (IBA) is to promote the conservation and restoration of the world’s bears through science-based research, management, and education.

About the Bear Conservation Fund

The Bear Conservation Fund (BCF) is a program of the International Association for Bear Research and Management (IBA), created to manage funds for IBA’s grants programs. Donations to the BCF come from annual charitable distributions of the John Sheldon Bevins Memorial Foundation and the Homer Bear Conservation Fund, an IBA donor-advised endowment, as well as from generous individual donors and zoos. The Bear Conservation Fund was initiated in 2004 to expand a 12-year conservation grants program funded by the Bevins Foundation. Now, each year the BCF brings in approximately $80,000 that supports 6-10 Research & Conservation grants, 1-4 Experience and Exchange Grants, several Conference Travel Grants, and a small grant to the Action Fund of the IUCN Bear Specialist Group.
WHO DECIDES WHERE YOUR MONEY SHOULD GO?
Meet two members of the Research & Conservation Grants Committee

ALI NAWAZ, PAKISTAN

My professional interests revolve around promoting co-existence of brown bear with humans, because I believe this is the only way to ensure long-term survival of carnivores in our part of the world where humans are still dependent on natural resources to meet their immediate livelihood needs.

I remain engaged with rural communities in northern Pakistan, to understand their attitudes and threats they face from bears. On the other hand, I am investigating distribution patterns of bears, factors that influence their occupancy at the landscape level, their niches, and both sources and spatial pattern of human-carnivore conflicts. I believe that learning acquired from community interactions and field research can help adopt the informed tools required to promote tolerance for bears.

GORDON WARBURTON, U.S.A.-NORTH CAROLINA

My passion has been bears since the late 1970’s when I would spend weekends observing bears in the heart of the Adirondack Mountains. I knew then that I wanted to be a “bear biologist” and work for the conservation of bears. I studied black bears in the Southern Appalachian Mountains of western North Carolina for my Master’s degree, and then joined the NC Wildlife Commission. Before being promoted to bear project leader for a number of years, I remained active with the IBA (serving as treasurer), the Southern Appalachian Black Bear Study Group and the Eastern Black Bear Workshop. I also spent two sessions in northern Peru on a private ecological preserve. I was appointed to the Grants Committee in 1993 (the charter year of the committee) and have served ever since that time. I try to bring a manager’s perspective and a good statistical background to the process as well as “institutional memory” of the history of the committee. On a personal note, I went to the College of Environmental Science and Forestry and was a friend of George Menkens. George was the other biologist on the plane with John Bevins. It was this connection, along with my career long passion for bears that motivated me to serve on the grants committee.
MEET PAOLO CIUCCI

The new Chair of the Research and Conservation Grants Committee

Being a wildlife biologist with a keen interest in large carnivores, especially wolves and bears, my dreams came true in 2004 when, relatively late in my career, I was asked to lead a research project on brown bears in the Abruzzo National Park, in central Italy. This is the last stronghold of a relic brown bear population which survived, against all odds, throughout thousands of years during which humans strongly impacted the land, the bears, and their habitat.Amazingly, these bears are still surviving today at close quarters with the modern world (just 2-hr drive from Rome), although their small numbers and reduced genetic variability make them one of the most endangered population of brown bears in Europe.

Though challenging, I do my best to guide administrators and managers to set practice and policy that will guarantee the continued existence of this remnant bear population. We endeavor to ensure the most efficient use of limited resources. I firmly believe that science-based conservation can go a long way toward ensuring better conditions and a brighter future for bear populations across the world, especially where bears can no longer count on vast wilderness areas.

I earned a Master’s degree at the University of Minnesota, and a Ph.D. at the University of Rome. I currently work doing research and teaching courses in Zoology, Wildlife Ecology, and Conservation. In my work I constantly advise students on how to design their studies to emphasize the practical implications for conservation, and from this background, I am honored to serve the IBA as chair of the Research and Conservation Grant Committee.
IBA’s Experience and Exchange (E&E) program awarded a grant to just one proposal in 2015. The collaboration between Ine Dorresteijn of Leuphana University, Lueneburg Germany and Nishith Dhariya of HNG University, Pata, India aims to identify the social drivers to human – sloth bear coexistence in Gujarat and Rajasthan states of India.

In India, it is estimated that roughly 1,000 people are attacked by sloth bears every year, dampening desire to conserve the species and causing retaliatory killing.

A thorough understanding of the factors underlying people’s attitudes towards bears is needed for effective conservation. This project involved holding theoretical and field-based workshops to integrate social science with human-wildlife conflict research.

Students were inspired with new ideas for their own research after participating in the theoretical portions of the workshop. Students were introduced to systems thinking as opposed to top-down analytical thinking as a way to understand sloth bear-human conflict.

The practical portion of the workshop provided students with hands-on field experience conducting semi-structured interviews followed by a comprehensive analysis of the interview texts.

One of the most important outcomes of the workshop was the high degree of interest shown by the students for multi-disciplinary research on human wildlife conflicts. The workshop was successful enough that one of the workshop participants (Ms. Nandita Patel) is going to initiate a PhD with a focus on human-bear conflict.
The Asiatic black bear is threatened principally by commercial poaching for parts. The market for parts of Asiatic black bears is centred in China; this country also comprises more than half the range of this species. Asiatic black bears are most coveted for the bile in their gallbladders, which is used in Traditional Chinese Medicine and has proven medicinal qualities.

The Chinese have developed a large and profitable industry to farm and extract bile from live bears; they assert that the plentiful, legal supply of farmed bile alleviates poaching of wild bears. Prompted by a resolution by the World Conservation Congress, the IUCN and Chinese government are initiating a multi-faceted, large scale study to investigate whether bear farming reduces or increases demand for wild bile. One component of this project involves tracking trends in wild bear populations and examining whether poaching, even in the presence of nearby bear farms, causes population declines. Here we evaluate various monitoring methods in nature reserves in China. The ultimate aim is to establish a nationwide black bear monitoring system.

How important is the IBA grant to the overall success of your project?

“This funding has enabled us to provide counsel to the Chinese government as they set up survey techniques for Asiatic black bears. Without BSG and IBA networking contacts we would be silent partners in this process.” William McShea
As part of a citizen science project initiated by Polar Bears International, we are developing new techniques and advancing existing methods to estimate polar bear body size and condition using 2D and 3D photography and geometric morphometric (body size and shape) methods. This technology will allow us to collect morphometric data of free-ranging wildlife without the need of chemical immobilization, making data collection less invasive, safe (for both the animal and scientists), and cost-effective.

Our ultimate goal is to apply our methods to the photographs of citizen scientists to monitor polar bears in the Western Hudson Bay population, where an online tool will allow individuals to contribute photographs and participate in photogrammetric measurement.

How important is the IBA grant to the overall success of your project?

“The grant received from IBA was crucial to the success of the project by covering travel costs to and from our field site in Churchill, Manitoba and travel to develop and calibrate the camera system.” Elizabeth Flaherty
Salviamo L’Orso (SLO) was founded in 2012 by a small group of bear-loving citizens in support of a small population of bears roaming the mountains of Central Italy (Abruzzo), only 100 km away from Rome. The goal of the IBA-funded project was to make two nearby towns into Bear-Smart Communities, where best practices for co-existence with bears were identified and implemented in collaboration with local authorities. The long-term goal is to create a culture of these best practices and export them to neighboring areas, thereby promoting the continuity of this relic population of brown bears.

The experience so far has been extremely successful. We’ve seen a dramatic decrease in bear predation of chicken coops and orchards. Not surprisingly, we’ve registered an interest and an acceptance for the bears by the local population. We installed several electric fences to defend local isolated farms, an expensive action made possible only by the grant provided by IBA. We also met with locals and distributed a best-practices manual, all of which worked to change townspeople’s attitudes and stem retaliatory acts against bears. What’s more, SLO is much appreciated for its work.

How important is the IBA grant to the overall success of your project?

“The IBA funding provided a significant impact on our community. Good ideas are helpful, but the funding provided by IBA is essential. The money provided by IBA for our work will help leverage additional funds from regional agencies.” Stefano Orlandini

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Kin-related social structures have been documented in bears and may influence reproductive success and survival. Groups of related females might only exist in habitats with sufficient food resources.

Using genetic analysis, Alexandra is studying brown bear kinships in relation to landscapes in a wildlife corridor and associated town, Baile Tusnad, in Romania where food is abundant and where human-bear conflicts are common. Preliminary results from this study indicate that numerous, unrelated bears crossed this area in a few months. These results have been employed to justify the maintenance of crucial passages within this wildlife corridor that are subject to development.

How important is the IBA grant to the overall success of your project?

“The IBA-Grant enables us to analyze tissue samples of harvested bears in order to examine how genetic relatedness between bears changes with increasing geographic distance from the town B. Tusnad. The study will help solve a regional bear conservation issue in B. Tusnad by motivating the responsible authorities to implement sustainable management actions such as the construction of ecoducts that allow bears and other wildlife to cross roads and railways.” Alexandra Sallay
Understanding how large carnivores interact within a predator-prey system is essential for their management and conservation. To date, most predator/prey studies have focused on one predator and their prey species. In the Rocky Mountains of Alberta, a diverse community of large predators including grizzly and black bears prey on a declining population of elk and an increasing population of deer. We will use scat-detection dogs to survey multiple predators in the area to determine how predators are spatially distributed relative to each other on the landscape. The premise is that this is an indication of how much they prey on each other. Secondly we will use scat analysis to evaluate their relative predation on elk versus other ungulates.

How important is the IBA grant to the overall success of your project?

“Receiving the IBA research grant has allowed me the opportunity to extend my study area to very remote locations in the Canadian Rockies, run more scat samples for DNA, and secure a presentation position in the 2015 Black Bear Workshop conference in Canmore, Alberta.” Eric Spilker
Fecal DNA from scats and DNA from hair are widely employed in brown bear research to monitor populations. There are problems: hair snaring is labor intensive and scats yield poor-quality DNA. We investigated the use of residual saliva from partially-consumed Pacific salmon carcasses as an alternative noninvasive source of brown bear DNA.

Our research compared the effectiveness and efficiency of molecular genotyping of saliva collected from partially-consumed sockeye and chum salmon carcasses to fecal samples, finding that salivary DNA was much less labor-intensive to collect and had higher genotyping success than DNA from fecal samples.

**How important is the IBA grant to the overall success of your project?**

“Without the IBA RCG grant, we would not have had adequate funding for the DNA extraction and genotyping of the hundreds of saliva and fecal samples we collected. The RCG grant represented a much needed, and very much appreciated, contribution from to our work.” Rachel Wheat
The Balochistan black bear, a rare and unique sub-species of Asiatic black bear, exists only in a small portion of its former range in Pakistan and Iran. What we know about this bear is limited. This study aims to investigate the current status of the Balochistan black bear through a systematic survey in the entire range of the black bear in Balochistan province.

This is an ambitious and labor-intensive survey. To date, Najeeb and his colleagues have conducted questionnaire and site occupancy surveys in 6 districts of their study area in Northern Balochistan, Pakistan, covering 828 sq km. A total of 373 people have been interviewed and 300 random points have been checked for sign of carnivore occupancy. Results are pending.
Recent declines in polar bear body condition, survival, and population size have been linked to declines in sea ice, but little is known about the mechanisms driving these declines. This project uses recently-developed tagging technology (accelerometers) tested on captive polar bears and then utilized on wild polar bears to remotely identify their behaviors and estimate energy demands. These data will be linked with GPS locations from satellite collars to examine how polar bear energetics are affected by sea ice conditions and seasons in the southern Beaufort Sea. Ultimately, this research will provide a greater understanding of how climate change is affecting polar bears.

To date, we have successfully developed a method to remotely identify polar bear resting, walking, and swimming behaviors in the wild. We have also constructed a metabolic treadmill and we are in the process of constructing a metabolic swimming flume to measure the energy demands of captive polar bears while resting, walking, and swimming. These data will be used to measure the energy demands of wild polar bears to understand how changing sea ice conditions are influencing food demands.

How important is the IBA grant to the overall success of your project?

“The funding I received from IBA 2 years ago was a huge help in establishing working relationships with a lot of different zoos, leading ultimately to the completion of the metabolic treadmill and swimming flume we were hoping for. That initial work helped me leverage other funds because we showed that we could bridge the gap between wild and captive research, and I was better able to refine my project and goals.”

Anthony Pagano
To date, very little scientific evidence exists regarding bear olfaction and thus major gaps exist in our knowledge. These gaps can be organized into three related categories: innateness, specificity, and sensitivity of odor-driven behaviors. Innateness refers to that component of bear odor-driven behavior that is not learned through reinforcement and repetition. A fundamental ecological question therefore is how young bears will respond to odors from potential threats such as adult males, other predators (wolves, coyotes, mountain lions), or humans in the absence of learning and reinforcement. The goal of the current project is to systematically address several aspects of odor-directed behavior in captive bears to broaden our understanding of this important function.

**Assessing the innate odor-driven behavior of brown bears**

"This research would not have been possible without IBA funds to enable construction of the olfactory testing chamber." Jansen Heiko
In the last decade, Japan has seen a dramatic increase in the number of Asiatic black bears, resulting in significant human-bear conflict and thousands of bears destroyed. Japan’s human population is aging, and many villages and attendant croplands have been abandoned, making optimal habitat for bears on a seasonal basis because of the abundance of food. This “luring” of bears away from their mountain ranges puts them in greater likelihood of destruction.

To explore the relationships between the land abandonment and increased bear occurrence near settlements, we are collecting data on food availability in these rural fringes and comparing these results with food availability in traditional mountain ranges. Additionally, we will develop an effective monitoring program to detect changes in seasonal foods for bears in these rural fringes and set up attendant bear avoidance systems for residents.

**How important is the IBA grant to the overall success of your project?**

“Funding opportunities are very limited for wildlife conservation in our country. This IBA grant enables us to seek long-term solutions to conflicts arising from humans having created preferred bear habitat.” Chihiro Takahata
Kamchatka brown bears are facing escalating threats from illegal harvest, increased human access to bear habitat, oil and gas development, mining, habitat loss and resource degradation. The last 10 years has seen a major increase in human-bear conflicts.

There is a paucity of research on this bear. We’ve initiated a long-term international project on the Kamchatka brown bear’s behavioral ecology. We aim to study movements, habitat selection, behavior, genetics, and human-bear conflicts for the Kamchatka bear so that successful management strategies can be implemented. Most importantly, we’ll develop a science-based program of population monitoring and set up management practices that will mitigate human-bear conflicts.

**LIYA POKROVSKAYA**

*The movements, habitat selection, behavior, genetics and human-bear conflicts of the Kamchatka brown bear*

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**How important is the IBA grant to the overall success of your project?**

“Financial support from the IBA gave us the possibility to undertake a pilot field expedition in 2015 and to start the analysis of hair samples.” Liya Pokrovskaya
Donations received between March 1, 2014 and February 14, 2015, provided $75,457 for 2015 grants. Once again, in 2015, IBA was able to allocate 100% of BCF donations to grants, taking no overhead. Private donations from individuals continue to comprise an increasing proportion of annual revenues relative to the John Bevins Memorial Foundation, IBA’s initial funding source, and the Homer Bear Conservation Fund, IBA’s internal endowment. Private donations ranged in size from $10 - $21,812 and BCF appreciates donations of any size. Every dollar helps bear conservation.

As allocated by the IBA Council, Research & Conservation Grants received 90% of all program funds, Experience and Exchange Grants 6%, Conference Travel Grants 2%, and the BSG Action Fund 2%.

Also funded in 2015 and not reflected in the pie chart: $4,426 for an Experience and exchange grant on human-sloth bear conflict in India; $7500 in carry-over funds from last year for continuation study on sun bear in Lao, PDR.
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