In Greece, a young brown bear gets a second chance after being struck by a car. See page 13.
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Editors: Matt Durnin (Managing), Jordan Schaul (Correspondence), Janissa Balcomb (Layout), Jim Tomlin (Production/Distribution), Tanya Rosen (Translation)
PO Box 462, Brookeville MD 20833 USA, Phone: +1 415-321-8369, Fax: +1 415-321-8637
Email: ibanews@bearbiology.com, Websites: www.bearbiology.com www.bearbiology.org
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**Editorial Policy**

*International Bear News* welcomes articles about biology, conservation, and management of the world’s eight bear species. Submissions of about 750 words are preferred, and photos, drawings, and charts are appreciated. Submissions to ibanews@bearbiology.com are preferred; otherwise, mail or fax to the address above. IBA reserves the right to accept, reject, and edit submissions.

**Deadline for the February 2008 is January 5, 2008**

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this issue. Artwork is copyrighted – do not reproduce without permission.

**Membership**

Use the form on page 31 to order or renew memberships, make donations, and/or update member information.
From the President

Harry Reynolds
PO Box 80843
Fairbanks AK 99708 USA
Phone: +1 907-479-5169
Email: threynolds@reynoldsalaska.com

My Last Column

The first snowfall of the season greeted me this morning, a sure sign that winter is on its way. Snow has capped mountains for several weeks. Its arrival in town means that black bears in lower elevations have been in dens for weeks and that brown bears in the Alaska Range are either in dens or seeking a good place to spend the winter. It is the turning of seasons, winter is here, and within a few months cubs will be born to bear mothers deep within their dens. This should bring us hope.

IBA has made some great strides during the last 6 years due to the concerted efforts and extraordinary service to bear conservation by IBA members. Council members have been especially active in furthering the ideals and objectives of our organization and in expanding its capabilities to serve bear conservation both regionally and globally. However, IBA’s real strength is in its individual members, their contributions to science-based conservation, research, management, education, and outreach to governments and local people. We have been effective because of our dedication to one goal: to assure that bears are still an integral part of the earth’s diversity far into the future.

IBA conferences have been held in 5 venues around the world during the last 6 years. Selection of conference sites is made to address bear conservation issues in a region, not because they provide an opportunity for some to travel. The attention that IBA’s stature as the science-based professional organization dedicated to conservation of bears serves to increase awareness of how important bear conservation issues are on local, regional, national and international scales.

International Progress

Increased awareness is a valuable tool in effecting national/regional changes to benefit bears. In Norway (2002); important regional issues included human-livestock conflicts; in San Diego (2004), global issues of declines; in Italy, the challenges posed by reintroductions/augmentations in areas heavily used by humans, as well as the need for better coordination among governmental entities charged with management of bears, and in Japan (2006), a wide range of issues in IBA’s first-ever conference in Asia, where so many populations are in trouble. This trend will continue in Mexico, a nation where brown bears became extinct in the 1960’s and American black bears are threatened or endangered. No conference will be held in 2008, but in 2009, we will hold a conference in Tbilisi, Georgia, where brown bear populations need increased attention. Selection of each of these venues provides evidence of IBA’s effectiveness and reach as a force for effective bear conservation programs where they are most needed.

Funding Bear Conservation

We are a science-based organization. But there are rarely funding sources sufficient to support the research programs or to provide the documentation so crucial to achieving our goals. Neither can information be applied effectively to management, education, or outreach without a secure funding base. We are strictly a non-profit organization. In the last 6 years, IBA gained the institutional advantages of incorporation as a non-profit organization. Dues go to reaching our goals and objectives to publishing International Bear News and Ursus, our professional journal and to providing a modest amount for other IBA expenses—no Council members are paid for their services—we are strictly a volunteer organization.

Due to the generosity of major donors as well as our membership, IBA has a grants program that very effectively addresses pressing problems for at-risk bear populations and the science upon which effective conservation must be based (see page 5). The John Sheldon Bevins Foundation formed the backbone of this program. Since 2001, several substantial donations allowed this program to grow substantially. The Homer’s Bear Conservation Fund, along with other generous donors, supported grants to ensure the future of bears and enabled the IBA Grants Program to grow during the last 6 years so that over $51,000 was disbursed in 2007 in the Research and Conservation Grants Program. In addition, IBA established the Exchange and Education Grants Program that enables exchange of expertise. This is done either by bringing a bear biologist to gain expertise by participating in an ongoing effective project, or by bringing an expert to a beginning project elsewhere. Those who have been involved in such programs attest to the effectiveness of this approach.

Ursus

Primarily through the efforts of Rich Harris, Ursus editor, with the enthusiastic backing of the IBA Council and the Publications Committee, Ursus has gained status in Bio-One, and Current Contents. This signifies that our journal is of recognized scientific quality as a peer-reviewed journal and that academic credit is gained for publication in its pages. This has been an important step.

Bear Specialist Group

While the IUCN (World Conservation Union) Species Survival Commission has long recognized the partnership of IBA and the Bear Specialist Group (BSG), a number of changes have occurred since 2001. It remains responsible for all bear species except
polar bears, which are represented by a separate entity, the Polar Bear Specialist Group. The BSG is now organized into Expert Teams which deal with all other bear species, as well as issues including trade in bear parts and captive bears. International Bear News serves as the official newsletter of the BSG, and IBA Conferences have begun serving as the venue for associated BSG meetings. The IBA Grants Program is organized to address important conservation concerns raised by the BSG in awarding grants.

Changes: Webmaster, IBN Editor, Grants Program

IBA has been very fortunate to have volunteer webmasters that enable us to provide our message to interested individuals, agencies and governments, and to enhance communication among members. Tully Hammill was our first webmaster and was responsible for our great start. Tully retired from his job at the University of Washington and in order to pursue other goals, also retired as IBA webmaster. Scott Risteen followed Tully’s lead and helped us through the evolutionary process of changes in webpage design and content. Following Scott’s untimely death, Diana Doan-Crider took this responsibility as well as many others. I’m sure that you are all aware of the continued evolution that she has overseen, including the stunning photographs of bears by Jenny Ross that now grace our webpage.

Teresa DeLorenzo was largely responsible for building International Bear News into the publication you see today. After putting an almost superhuman effort into its evolution, Council found that after Teresa stepped down, a total of 5 volunteers were required to continue the high standards that she set. IBA is still very much indebted to her talents. The new IBN editorial staff of Matt Durnin, Jordan Schaul, Jim Tomlin, Janissa Balcomb and Tanya Rosen have ably taken over these tasks and continuing to provide the high quality that we enjoy.

The IBA Research and Conservation Grants Committee is an important force in providing grants for conservation and research programs throughout the world where they will do the most good. Erich Follmann let this effort for many years but resigned because of the press of other work. Frederick Dean continued in this capacity and has worked tirelessly to see that the system is fair and addresses the goals and objectives of IBA. Both these individuals, along with members of this committee are and have been crucial to IBA’s science-based support of conservation.

Equipment Donation to IBA

Richard Voss, refuge manager of the US Fish and Wildlife Service Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, recently arranged the donation of surplus scanning telemetry receivers to IBA for use through the Research and Conservation Grants Program (RCGP). Although newer models of receivers have supplanted the use of these receivers (150-152 MHz) they are in good condition and can effectively be loaned for RCGP projects. For details contact Frederick Dean, RCGP Committee Chair.

The Future

The last 6 years have been a time of building by IBA and I am happy to have been a part of it. By the time you read this, a new IBA president and Council will have been elected and will continue our forward movement. We’ve come a long way, but challenges facing bear populations are accelerating and we will all need to become more involved and dedicated to this task. The issues confronting all bear populations will not change, but the urgency to address them will. Changes in habitat as a result of global warming will not only affect be habitat of polar bears in the Arctic Ocean, but certainly most or all other bear species as well, in ways that we will hope to understand.

Final Point

For some bear species, November should be a time of rest before the renewal of birth that occurs in winter dens. However, despite this upcoming event of regeneration, populations of all bear species are at risk in at least a portion of their ranges around the world.

If we are to achieve the goals of bear conservation, each of us needs to accept the responsibility and vision to do more to achieve bear conservation. We each need to reach beyond our day-to-day concerns and do more for at-risk bear populations wherever they occur. This requires committing to support conservation efforts in any of its forms—increasing our understanding of factors that deplete bears, bringing this message to decision-makers and local people alike. We will need to show why bear conservation provides human benefits, locally, nationally, and globally is in their own interest. It is our individual, our collective, and our organization’s responsibility to go beyond the status quo and to address real problems facing bears. Restoration and maintenance of the world’s bears will require building support—monetary, intellectual, and educational—for bears. In short, knowing why and how is not enough. We need to follow through with action.
IBA Experience and Exchange Grants 2008

Deadline for Applications December 31, 2007

Ole Jakob Sorensen
Nord-trondelag University College
Faculty of Social Sciences and Natural Resources
Box 2501
N-7729 Steinkjer, Norway
Phone: +47 74112052
Email: ole.j.sorensen@hint.no

Please note that the deadline for applying for IBA’s Experience and Exchange (E&E) grants program for 2008 is December 31, 2007. This is a change from 2006 and 2007, when applications were not due until February of the program year. This means that both of IBA’s grants programs, E&E and Research and Conservation (R&C) grants, now share the same application deadline.

E&E grants are an excellent way to gain experience and international perspective, benefit from others’ expertise in a field setting, and initiate or strengthen across-project collaborations. Exchanges should be designed to last several weeks to several months, must be of mutual interest for both hosts and visiting researchers, and should lay the groundwork for continuing partnership. Grants are awarded for up to $1500 to help offset the costs of travel. Applications should demonstrate efforts by both parties to find and provide supplemental support for the exchange project, e.g. in-kind support such as complimentary food and lodging for the visiting exchange partner.

Application information and forms can be found on the IBA website, at www.bearbiology.com. For other questions, contact Ole Jakob Sorensen, E&E program chair, at the above address.

Bear Conservation Fund (BCF): Looking to 2008

Karen Noyce, Chair and IBA Vice President (Americas)
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
1201 East Highway 2
Grand Rapids MN 55744, USA
Email: karen_noyce@bearbiology.com or knoyce@bearconservationfund.org

The Bear Conservation Fund (BCF) was started 3 years ago by IBA as the funding arm for several programs, including Research and Conservation Grants, Experience and Exchange Grants, and Information/Publications Outreach. The success of the early Bevins Grants program, the growing conservation needs for bears around the world, and the increasing number of biologists ready to study those problems and address those needs fueled a desire for IBA to expand the capacity and direction of our programs.

If you are an IBA member who has a current email address on file with IBA, you recently received a copy of the BCF’s 2006-2007 Annual Report. If you did not receive the report, you can access it on the IBA website (and you might want to check with the IBA secretary to make sure your correct email address is on file!). I encourage everyone to take a moment to look through the report. It will give you an overview of where the BCF derives its financial support and how the money gets apportioned among programs. I hope it will also give you an appreciation for our philosophy that investing in individuals – in their research and their development as scientists and collaborators – is perhaps the most effective way to advance science-based bear conservation with the modest investments we are able to make.

I also encourage you to download the report and distribute it to people you know who have an interest in bears and their conservation. IBA has money to put into grants programs only because there are individuals who have put their faith in IBA and provided their generous personal financial support. One family started the John Bevins Memorial Fund, which provided the start-up funds for the Research and Conservation Grants program 15 years ago and now provides a major source of funding every year. Another individual anonymously provided IBA with its own endowment, the Homer Bear Conservation Fund, which, starting in 2007 will henceforth provide a significant increase to the funding base for our programs each year. Other individuals and families have been very generous as well, each to the degree they found possible.

Meanwhile, however, the number of worthwhile projects and the dollars requested continue to grow. One project builds on another and the very existence of IBA’s particular grants programs encourages pursuit of new ideas that might be otherwise very difficult to fund.

In other words, the Bear Conservation Fund needs to continue to grow. We need to continue to seek new individuals with a passion for wildlife who want to put their charitable dollars to good use. As bear biologists, we all have experienced the enormous interest that the public has in these animals. As chair of the BCF, I need the help of all IBA members to inform people about our programs and to help identify and encourage those who are able and might be willing to put their faith in, and their dollars into, IBA’s programs, by donating to the Bear Conservation Fund. A single donor can make a huge difference. I welcome ideas and communication from all of you. And I am always looking for more volunteers to help on the BCF committee. Thanks. My contact information is above.
The Ninth Bear

Dave Garshelis & Bruce McLellan
Co-chairs IUCN Bear Specialist Group
Emails:
  dave.garshelis@dnr.state.mn.us
  bruce.mcnelan@gov.bc.ca

Taxonomists now acknowledge that there are eight species of bears in the world. But not everyone agrees. Some Chinese still dispute the giant panda being classified as a bear. Some Mongolians assert that the Gobi bear should be classified as a distinct species. Local people in many remote places around the world report what they believe to be a distinct species of bear other than that recognized by science (all are believed by scientists to be age groups, color morphs, or behavioral variations within populations of known species).

And then there is the Yeti. There is really little disagreement now that the Yeti is also a bear – indeed *a form* of brown bear. Tibetans and Nepalis who have seen it may assert that it is a bear when walking on four feet, but a yeti when walking on two.

We are not going to address the taxonomic status of the Yeti *per se*, but rather use the elusive and symbolic nature of the Yeti to discuss what seems like the ninth bear – the brown bears of Asia. While North Americans and Europeans produce massive quantities of data and peer-reviewed papers on population size, ecology, genetics, behavior and management of brown bears on these two continents, the brown bears of Asia remain largely unknown to much of the world. A good deal of naturalist work has been conducted in Russia, but most of these writings have not been translated into English. Moreover, the level of scientific rigor has not kept pace with work in North America and Europe.

In terms of conservation: brown (grizzly) bears are being removed from the endangered species list in the U.S. (Yellowstone); brown bear populations have been rapidly expanding in Scandinavia; and due to conservation measures and restocking programs, several European countries have seen their first bears since being extirpated long ago. Meanwhile, their status in Asia remains largely unknown, and also largely out of public concern.

The Bear Specialist Group has two expert teams representing Asian brown bears: northern and southern, divided by a rather imprecise and somewhat arbitrary line in northern China. As will be noted from reading the following two reports, the brown bears of Asia are poorly understood, and significant improvements in our understanding are unlikely to occur in the immediate future. As such, they almost do seem like the neglected and mythical ninth bear — if they really were a different species, then maybe there would be less complacency about them.

News and Status of South Asian Brown Bears

S. Sathyakumar
Wildlife Institute of India
P.O. Box 18
Chandrabani, Dehradun 248 001,
India
Email: ssk@wii.gov.in

O. Emre Can
Nature Society PK 871
Ulus, 06045 Ankara, Turkey
Email: emre.can@bozayi.org

The South Asian Brown Bear Expert Team (SABBET) of the Bear Specialist Group was created in 2004 to work for the conservation of brown bears in south Asian nations. This is not only an area with complex geography and ecology, but also an area with a complex human history, resulting in a diversity of languages, and political unrest. Despite some obstacles, we have gradually increased our membership and our ability to function as a team. Not all members are what might be considered brown bear experts, but they are all people with knowledge and concern for bears, and are directly involved in conservation issues related to bears.

Present members (from west to east) include: Ozgun Emre Can (Turkey), Bejan Lortkipanidze (Georgia), Victor Lukarevskiy (Caucasus and former Soviet stans), Bernhard Gutleb (Iran), Alexander Esipov (Uzbekistan), Jumabay uulu Kubanichbek (Kyrgyzstan), Ali Nawaz (Pakistan), Kasif Sheikh (Pakistan), S. Sathyakumar (India), Dawa Tsering (Tibet), and Rich Harris (China). The tasks assigned to SABBET were to evaluate the current status of brown bears in the south Asian nations; identify threats to bears and bear habitat; identify conservation needs in south Asia; and identify more individuals who can contribute to the work of the SABBET.

Identifying Issues and Conservation Priorities

The first activity of the SABBET was a questionnaire survey of members, carried out in 2005 to identify major issues and gaps in knowledge for brown bear populations in this region. Retaliatory killings to reduce livestock depredations and poaching for bear parts were identified as major threats. Important needs included: assessment of relative abundance of bears (bear signs) in different habitats/areas, population trend monitoring, ecological information, and information on bear-human conflicts.

Distribution Mapping

Members of the SABBET were heavily involved in the BSG’s range-wide mapping of Asian Bears. A workshop was convened following the 17th IBA Conference, Japan, in October 2006 where participants mapped known points and ranges, and identified areas where brown bear occurrence is as yet uncertain. Follow-up emails incorporated inputs from those...
who could not attend the workshop, and to clarify discrepancies. This process is now nearly complete.

**Status of Populations (west to east)**

**Turkey:** In 2002, O. Emre Can completed a study on the current distribution and conservation priorities for brown bears. Habitat degradation and direct persecution were identified as the major threats. Brown bears have become locally extinct in some areas in western and southern Turkey in the last 50 years; many protected areas are too small to act as refuges. Further study in 2005 showed that bear-human conflicts, the root of most persecution of bears, is particularly intense in northeastern Turkey. Therefore, a pilot project was started to create a “bear aware” community in this region. Can is now working with national authorities to continue this project on a larger scale.

**Iraq:** A pilot while flying over Iraq during a routine sortie in 2006 noticed the image of a bear on the thermal imagery sensor of the aircraft (see *IBN* 15(2):12–13). This is the only recent documentation of a bear in Iraq.

**Iran:** Bernhard Gutleb and Ghaemi report that the brown bear population in Iran is likely stable with three distinct populations: one large population in the Caspian forest of the northern slopes of the Elburz mountain ridge (19,000 km²), one in the Caucasus at the border with Azerbaijan and Armenia (3500 km²), and the third in Central Zagros (5000 km²). The total Iranian bear population has been roughly estimated at 1200–1800. These bears are protected by law, with some occasional shooting licenses in Elburz. Bears are forbidden meat for Muslims, so poaching is low.

**Afghanistan:** Rich Harris has recently confirmed the presence of brown bears in the Big Pamir Section of Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan. He reported observing two different family groups, one female with two cubs, and another female with two yearlings. Although earlier surveys have indicated presence of brown bears in this area based on secondary information, this is the first confirmed record based on sightings. This report and the one from Iraq are of high significance as they have renewed our hopes that brown bears have persisted in these harsh environments in small numbers, so conservation opportunities still exist.

**Pakistan:** Mohammed Ali Nawaz completed his PhD fieldwork on brown bears in the Deosai Plains in 2006. He reports a population of 150–200 brown bears for Pakistan, with declining numbers in all areas except for Deosai Plains, where bear numbers are increasing. Brown bears have become locally extinct in a few areas such as Chitral, Hazara and
Bear Specialist Group

Waziristan and their distribution has retracted eastwards. Habitat fragmentation is the major cause for declining brown bear populations in Pakistan. Recent conservation initiatives include creation of Conserves in Minimerg and Neelam valleys to protect brown bear range.

India: S. Sathyakumar conducted brown bear–human conflict surveys in Zanskar and Suru Valleys, Ladakh. NPS Chauhan and Bipun Rathore initiated a follow-up study on the ecology of brown bears in Kugti Wildlife Sanctuary, Himachal Pradesh. In 2005, Sathyakumar used a questionnaire-based survey to assess brown bear status in all Protected Areas (PAs) within their range in northern India. Results indicated that brown bears occur in 23 PAs and 35 other areas. They are considered rare in all but a few of these. The potential brown bear habitat in the Himalayas of India is estimated to be about 36,800 km². No substantiated population estimate exists, but it seems likely that this area supports <1,000 brown bears. If brown bears exist in eastern India, they are very rare. The Wildlife Institute of India’s proposed research project on large carnivores and their prey in Khangchendzonga National Park and Biosphere, Sikkim, due to begin in 2008, should yield valuable information on brown bears in this region.

Nepal: While working on a story about northern Nepal, a reporter for a Spanish newspaper was shown photographs of bear tracks that were taken at very high altitude (5500 m) in the Upper Mustang region of western Nepal. This matches the highest elevation recordings for brown bears in India (and thus in the world). This is only the second documented, recent evidence of bears in this area (see IBN 13(4):12–14), and the only evidence of brown bears anywhere in Nepal. There are, unfortunately, no members of the SABBET from Nepal.

China: Dawa Tsering reports that in the Chang Tang region of Tibet (China), there are no government projects specifically aimed at bear conservation; however, other general large-scale conservation initiatives (monitoring, patrolling, prohibiting poaching, capacity building) benefit bears. Ironically, since implementation of various wildlife protection policies in 1993 (including the disarming of local people), bear conflicts have increased nearly 5-fold: problems include livestock kills, raiding of human food supplies, damage to dwellings, and attacks on livestock herders. Bears are the largest source of wildlife damage in this area. The WWF-China Tibet Program and Tibet University are actively working on projects to try to resolve this growing issue.

We have no information on brown bear status, other than some point locations, for Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. We do not know whether this species even
still occurs in Bhutan or eastern India. We hope to encourage field studies in these areas; the proposed research project in Sikkim is one such initiative.

News on North Asian Brown Bears: Hokkaido

Tsutomu Mano
Nature Conservation Department
Hokkaido Institute of Environmental Sciences
Kita-19 Nishi-12 Kita-ku, Sapporo
060-0819, Japan
Phone: +81-11-747-3570
Email: mano@hokkaido-ies.go.jp

The massive region represented by the Northern Asia Brown Bear Expert Team (NABBET) of the Bear Specialist Group includes Russia from the Ural Mountains to the Far East, Mongolia, North Korea, and Japan – an area that holds more than half the world’s brown bears. With such a diversity of landscapes, come a variety of conservation issues and problems. Most populations in the region are sufficiently large as to be legally hunted; but poaching and depredation kills remain a problem. This report deals with one small portion of this range, Hokkaido, the northern island of Japan.

Hokkaido supports a large brown bear population (whereas Asiatic black bears inhabit only the southern islands of Japan). Human-bear conflicts have been increasing since the abolishment of the spring bear hunt in 1990. Agricultural damage (to sugar beets and corn) in 2005 was 2.3 times that in 1990. Consequently, the number of nuisance kills in August and September has significantly increased. Control kills are carried out by private hunters under the direction of the local mayors. Regrettably, almost no measures for agricultural damage abatement have been employed in Hokkaido. Bears also cause human injuries, some of which have been fatal. Bear attacks on humans have remained relatively constant for the past 20 years, with 1.3 injuries and 0.5 deaths per year; 44% of these involved hunters.

Concern over increasing control kills make population trend monitoring a priority on Hokkaido. Forest workers in the National Forest, the Prefectural Forest, and the University Forests have recorded sign per unit effort as an index to bear density, a system that seemed to work well until 2002. Unfortunately, the Forestry Agency, which administers the National Forest, dropped out of this program in 2003, meaning that over half the bear habitat in Hokkaido is no longer monitored.

Another brown bear issue on Hokkaido concerns Shiretoko National Park, which was registered as a World Natural Heritage site in 2005. Although it was noted that bear-human interactions should be managed properly upon registration (http://whc.unesco.org/archive/advisory_body_evaluation/1193.pdf), there is still no official brown bear management plan for the area. An increasing number of bear conflicts have been occurring outside the park, with no procedure for dealing with them. New genetic and ecological research on brown bears is being conducted on the Shiretoko Peninsula and the surrounding areas with the financial support of Hokkaido International Airlines LTD, hoping to reveal a source-sink structure of the bear population in and out of the park.

Brown bear in Shiretoko region, Hokkaido, December, 2007

Brown bear tracks in a crop field in southwestern Hokkaido, where the G8 Summit will be held in July 2008
Bear Specialist Group

The Bear Specialist Group (BSG) is organized into species and topical expert teams, each with two co-chairs. These co-chairs, along with some other specialists comprise the coordinating committee, which is listed below.

Coordinating Committee Co-chairs

Bruce McLellan
bruce.mclellan@gov.bc.ca

Dave Garshelis
dave.garshelis@dnr.state.mn.us

European Brown Bear Expert Team Co-chairs

Djuro Huber
huber@vef.hr

Jon Swenson
jon.swenson@ina.nlh.no

North Asian Brown Bear Expert Team Co-chairs

John Paczkowski
thebearsare@hotmail.com

Tsutomu Mano
mano@hokkaido-ies.go.jp

South Asian Brown Bear Expert Team Co-chairs

S. Sathyakumar
ssk@wii.gov.in

Ozugun Emre Can
emre.can@bozayi.org

Asiatic Black Bear Expert Team Co-chairs

Dave Garshelis
dave.garshelis@dnr.state.mn.us

Mei-hsiu Hwang
bear1000@ms25.hinet.net

Sun Bear Expert Team Co-chairs

Gabriella Fredriksson
gmfred@indo.net.id

Rob Steinmetz
rob@wwfthai.org

Sloth Bear Expert Team Co-chairs

N.P.S. Chauhan
npsc@wii.gov.in

Shyamala Ratnayeke
sratnaye@utk.edu

Giant Panda Expert Team Co-chairs

Lü Zhi
luzhi@pku.edu.cn

Wang Dajun
djwang@pku.edu.cn

Andean Bear Expert Team Co-chairs

Isaac Goldstein
igoldstein@wcs.org

Ximena Velez-Liendo
xime_velez@yahoo.co.uk

Trade in Bear Parts Expert Team Co-chairs

Chris Servheen
grizz@umontana.edu

Chris Shepard
cstsea@po.jaring.my

Captive Bears Expert Team Co-chairs

Lydia Kolter
lkolter@zoo-koeln.de

Jackson Zee
jzee@ifaw.org

Mexican Black Bear Coordinator

Diana Crider
d-crider@tamuk.edu

IBA Representative

Harry Reynolds
hreynolds@reynoldsalaska.com

Coordinating Committee Member

John Seidensticker
seidenstickerj@si.edu

Polar Bear Specialist Group Chair

Andrew Derocher
derocher@ualberta.ca

Mexican Black Bear Coordinator

Diana Crider
d-crider@tamuk.edu

IBA Representative

Harry Reynolds
hreynolds@reynoldsalaska.com

Coordinating Committee Member

John Seidensticker
seidenstickerj@si.edu

Polar Bear Specialist Group Chair

Andrew Derocher
derocher@ualberta.ca

Andean Bear Expert Team Co-chairs

Isaac Goldstein
igoldstein@wcs.org

Ximena Velez-Liendo
xime_velez@yahoo.co.uk

Trade in Bear Parts Expert Team Co-chairs

Chris Servheen
grizz@umontana.edu

Chris Shepard
cstsea@po.jaring.my

Captive Bears Expert Team Co-chairs

Lydia Kolter
lkolter@zoo-koeln.de

Jackson Zee
jzee@ifaw.org

Mexican Black Bear Coordinator

Diana Crider
d-crider@tamuk.edu

IBA Representative

Harry Reynolds
hreynolds@reynoldsalaska.com

Coordinating Committee Member

John Seidensticker
seidenstickerj@si.edu

Polar Bear Specialist Group Chair

Andrew Derocher
derocher@ualberta.ca

Mexican Black Bear Coordinator

Diana Crider
d-crider@tamuk.edu

IBA Representative

Harry Reynolds
hreynolds@reynoldsalaska.com

Coordinating Committee Member

John Seidensticker
seidenstickerj@si.edu

Polar Bear Specialist Group Chair

Andrew Derocher
derocher@ualberta.ca
Captive Bears in Georgia

Irakli Shavgulidze
NACRES - Biodiversity Conservation and Research
PO Box 20
0179 Tbilisi, Georgia
Email: irakli.shavgulidze@nacres.org

Koen Cuypren
Alertis - fund for bear and nature conservation
PO Box 9
3910 AA Rhenen, the Netherlands
Email: kcuyten@alertis.nl

Captive Bear Assessment in Georgia

Illegal capturing of bears, mostly cubs, has become a very widespread form of poaching in Georgia. The three or four month old cubs are taken from their mother who is killed in the process. This inflicts serious damage to the wild bear population, which is categorized on the National Red List as “under critical threat of extinction”. Moreover, keeping wild-caught bears in private ownership is an illegal act.

The project “Captive Bear Assessment in Georgia” was carried out with financial support from the Dutch based organization Alertis Fund for Bear and Nature Conservation, and specifically focuses on this problem.

The goal of the project was to inventory bears kept in captivity illegally in Georgia and based on this inventory develop, together with various interested parties and stakeholders, an action plan for solving the problem.

The problem of illegal capture and keeping brown bears in private ownership in Georgia has become especially prevalent since the 1990’s. Today one can see captive bears most often next to roadside restaurants and gasoline stations. The main motivation of illegal owners is attracting customers, although in many cases bears are kept in private homes. The majority of illegally kept bears are living in deplorable conditions. With a few lucky exceptions, captive bears are locked up in small cages, where even basic sanitary norms are not observed. The animals lack the necessary living space with shade, proper care and food, sometimes even drinking water (their food is often poor and monotonous; diet mainly consists of restaurant leftovers and bread).

In addition to simply keeping bears behind bars, some illegally acquired bears which are used by street photographers to attract customers who want photos taken with the bears (e.g., on the Black Sea coast and in Bakuriani Winter Resort). As a result, the majority of captive bears have severe signs of stress and neurosis (e.g. red eyes, unrest, stereotypy’s, etc) and in some cases the bears become victims of cruel treatment as people beat them with sticks or throw stones at them. Generally, owners of the captive bears are not familiar with proper care of bears. They are not observing any safety measures either, and thus are exposing themselves and their families, as well as others to serious danger. The existing situation is absolutely unacceptable for a humane society and damages the international reputation of the country.

NACRES has been working on the problem of captive bears since 1995. Until recently, due to weak state mechanisms and absence of control, the government has not taken any decisive steps for solving this problem. However, nowadays the environmental police and the Biodiversity Protection Unit of the Ministry of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources are strongly interested in solving the issue. We hope a greater concern and concerted effort by individual, organizations and the government will make it possible to solve this problem once and for all.

NACRES finished the first stage of our project “Captive Bear As-
essment in Georgia” by inventorying captive bears in 2006. Sites and bear owners were visited, issues discussed and basic information was given on how to take care of bears and improve the welfare of the animal on a basic level. Overall 25 individuals were inspected and detailed information regarding each bear was gathered and put in a database specifically created for this purpose. A Dutch student visited Georgia for her Master Thesis in 2006 and prepared a detailed assessment procedure to handle welfare problems of captive bears in Georgia. This document is available upon request. For more information and contact details visit www.alertis.nl.

The next step in the project was to prepare a draft Captive Bear Action Plan, which was written after carefully analyzing the information gathered during the project. A workshop was held on the 11th of May 2007 at the Ministry of Environment with relevant stakeholders present, including the director and other representatives of the Biodiversity Protection Unit, representatives of the Environmental Inspectorate (environmental police) and various NGOs active in the area. The draft Action Plan, which was prepared by NACRES, was discussed and analyzed and some legal obstacles had to be tackled. The law stipulates that in cases where the state takes enforcement action against an individual illegally keeping a bear, it should also confiscate the animal. In situations where there is no shelter for placing these confiscated animals the state is restricted in its actions and is forced to turn a blind eye until the proper bear shelter is created. So it is necessary either to change the law and give corresponding state bodies more flexibility in dealing with this problem or to start building a bear shelter as soon as possible, so that the Environmental Inspectorate can begin taking action against illegal bear owners, confiscate the bear(s) and thus eliminate the problem. After incorporating the feedback and comments that were raised during the workshop and other discussions with various interested parties, a final version of the Captive Bear Action Plan was prepared in July 2007. The document is being disseminated among all interested parties and NACRES is starting to work actively to implement the plan.

Captive Bear Rescue Initiative

In August 2006 the municipality of Rustavi ceased financing the zoo located in the Rustavi Cultural and Recreational Park. The majority of the zoos inhabitants were sheltered in Tbilisi Zoo. Unfortunately the Tbilisi Zoo was unable to accommodate three European brown bears from Rustavi and a decision was made to euthanize the bears. At this stage NACRES approached Alertis to seek...
help with the bears. After active consultations with Alertis a decision was made to take the bears to a bear sanctuary called the ‘Bear Forest’ and located within Ouwehands Zoo in the Netherlands. The ‘Bear Forest’ is a sanctuary for mistreated and abused dancing bears, circus bears and other captive bears rescued mainly from Eastern European countries. The ‘Bear Forest’ is a semi-natural 20,000 sq. meter enclosure with trees, sand, running water and dens for hibernation. To stimulate the bears’ natural behavior, a special diet, enrichment programs and interactions with other animals like wolves play an important role.

The project “Captive Bear Rescue Initiative” was launched and financed by Alertis with the goal of transferring the three brown bears from Rustavi Zoo to the Netherlands as soon as possible. At the time the former head of the now closed Rustavi Zoo, was temporarily maintaining the bears using his own finances. In November 2006 NACRES took over with the financial support of Alertis and supplied the bears with food and proper care. At the same time Alertis started a campaign throughout the Netherlands to raise funds for transporting these bears to the Netherlands. These funds were gathered surprisingly quickly because the general Dutch public was deeply moved by the story of the bears.

During the last months of 2006 NACRES and Alertis were busy dealing with logistical and legal arrangements connected with the export of the bears to the Netherlands. Much preparation was necessary, such as; beginning the official application procedure for obtaining the CITES export permits, discussing possible routes and ways of taking the bears to the Netherlands (land and air transportation means), that would allow us to transfer bears according to the international standards of live animal transportation.

On April 29, 2007, three brown bears were transported with a chartered Russian cargo plane from Tbilisi to Maastricht in the Netherlands. After a few weeks of quarantine and extensive examination they were released into the ‘Bear Forest’ in Rhenen where they now live together with seven other former circus and dancing bears. The three Georgian bears were lucky to survive, but unfortunately their brothers and sisters in Georgia are still under great and continuous danger of extermination.

Getting a Second Chance in Greece

Constantinos Godes, Vice-President
Dr. Yorgos Mertzanis*, Chief Scientist
CALLISTO, 123 Mitropoleos st.
54621 Thessaloniki, Greece
www.callisto.gr

Alexandros A. Karamanlidis
Research Associate, ARCTUROS
3 Victor Hugo St.
54625 Thessaloniki, Greece
www.arcturos.gr

Traffic volume, as well as new highway construction in northwest Greece, has an increasing impact on brown bear habitat connectivity and population status.

It must have been a surreal experience for drivers on the newly constructed “Egnatia” highway in Northern Greece when, on the evening of the 21st of August, they saw a young bear walking along the road! The animal had managed to cross the “bear-proof” highway fence, was hit by a passing car, and was found injured wandering in a wide interchange, unable to find a way out.

The incident occurred in the area of Polymylos, which is near two mountains recently re-colonized by bears. Immediately, experts from the two leading bear NGOs, CALLISTO and ARCTUROS, were notified and in a joint operation managed to tranquilize the injured animal. “Jumper”, as the 2.5 year-old male bear was affectionately named, was handled by a CALLISTO veterinarian and transported to the Veterinary Station of ARCTUROS for rehabilitation.

In order to monitor the behavior of Jumper, he was fitted with a satellite collar and is being tracked by a CALLISTO field team currently working in the area. For the first few days after his release the young bear remained sedentary but he then started moving again, covering more than 40 km in just a few days.
2007: a Grim Year for Nature in Greece

Alexandros A. Karamanlidis
Research Associate, ARCTUROS
3, Victor Hugo St.
54625 Thessaloniki; Greece
Email: alkar@bio.auth.gr
www.arcturos.gr

The year 2007 will remain in the collective conscience of Greeks as the most tragic year since the end of the second Big War. The forest fires that ravaged the country left more than sixty people dead, hundreds more homeless and millions of acres of precious Mediterranean forest burned. Amidst such a catastrophe it has been difficult to draw attention to the plight of Greece’s most endangered terrestrial carnivore, the brown bear. Despite some encouraging signs such as the establishment of management bodies for the country’s national parks, there has been still little tangible progress in the effective protection and management of critical brown bear habitat. In the meantime, negative human – bear interactions in Greece seem to be increasing. Bear – car collisions have emerged as a significant mortality factor for the species in the country. On the 21st of July a seven month old male bear was killed while crossing a road in the Prefecture of Florina; the third incident at the same spot and the tenth fatal incident recorded since 2003. A month latter, a young bear was injured at the “Egnatia” highway (see story, “Getting a Second Chance,” on page 13 of this issue). This is the second incident of its kind on a highway, during the construction of which, a significant amount of human and logistic resources have been invested in order to mitigate its negative impacts on wildlife.

Following three bear attacks on humans in the last three years, one of which resulted in the first recorded human fatality in the country, another person was injured by a bear in late August while watering his corn crops. The attack took place near the town of Kastoria, far from the usual habitat of the species. Reacting to the inability of state authorities to step in, the NGO ARCTUROS, which has 15 years experience in protecting the species in the country, has taken urgently needed conservation actions. In the case of bear – car collisions a memorandum with guidelines on how to effectively deal with the problem was prepared and distributed among all relevant state authorities. To address the issue of bear attacks on humans, ARCTUROS is continuing its information campaign on the reasons that lead bears to venture so far from their “natural” habitat and how to behave during a bear encounter.

Building highways in Greece the bear-friendly way: the “E65” highway

One of the most important accomplishments in bear conservation in recent years in Greece has been the consideration of environmental management and sustainability in the planning and construction of large infrastructure projects. Following an almost decade-long legal battle, the NGO ARCTUROS and other environmental groups managed to “convince” the Greek State to adopt a holistic approach in the construction of the “Egnatia” highway. In practice, this has translated into the construction of enough tunnels and green bridges in order to ensure habitat connectivity for the endangered brown bear in Greece (see also Karamanlidis & Mertzakis 2003). ARCTUROS has carried out the first part of an environmental study, prior to the construction of the highway, and is currently involved in the second part of the study during the construction of the highway.

Acknowledging the expertise gathered during these efforts, the Greek State has appointed ARCTUROS with the task of carrying out a similar environmental study during the construction of the “E65” highway. The north-south “E65” highway will connect to the east-west “Egnatia” highway in the Prefecture of Grevena, which is one of the most important areas for the species in the country. In the first phase of the project, which started in September 2007 and will take place prior to the construction of the highway, the two top predators in the area, bears and wolves, will be studied. Using satellite telemetry, infrared video cameras and indirect signs of presence, scientists from ARCTUROS will study the activity patterns of these two carnivores in order to propose appropriate mitigation measures. In addition, genetic material collected from bears will provide additional information on the genetic diversity of the species in the area and will complement information gathered by ARCTUROS during the “Hellenic Bear Register” project. Finally, a separate part of the study will deal with compensation measures towards local inhabitants and the long-term environmental sustainability of the highway.
To undertake this research six brown bears (5 adult males and one sub-adult female) were fitted with GPS radio-collars in spring 2007 (see photo). Trapping success was enhanced by Dr. John Beecham’s (Idaho FWS) important contribution in assisting with Callisto’s trapping team for one and a half months (from April to June 2007).

John was impressed by the size and condition of the marked bears given it was so early in the season and the geographical latitude of the habitat. The largest male weighed 247 kg! The large size may have had to do with the unusually mild winter conditions allowing bears to continue feeding over a large part of the previous winter season. John and the whole team were also impressed by a dominant male who charged and chased our field car while leaving the trapping location!

Unfortunately, all but one of the males lost their collars within a month of collaring. Most of the collars were found near bear rub trees and some of them had bite marks! Interaction between males during the mating season is presumed to be the main reason for this premature collar loss.

A second trapping session is now underway and fortunately John is back with all of his bear trapping “secrets” as well as some heavy duty swivels for the bear snares. John has also been able to provide two more GPS/Argos collars! So far three adult females and two adult males have been captured and collared and we hope for two more bears! © Callisto

U.S. – Greek Cooperation

Dr. Yorgos Mertzanis, Chief Scientist CALLISTO, 123 Mitropoleos St. 54621 Thessaloniki, Greece Email: mertzanis@callisto.gr www.callisto.gr

A monitoring project to assess impacts from construction of the Egnatia highway on the bear population and habitat in the eastern Pindos mountain range (see International Bear News November 2005 edition) has now entered its second phase (2006-2008). Highway construction is progressing quickly and so too the transformation of bear habitat over a large area along this 37 km stretch of highway.

The CALLISTO field team has been studying bear behaviour and movement in response to disturbance from construction noise (about 12 working camps are operating 24 hours a day) and habitat changes as well as attempting to determine use of the existing mitigation structures (13 tunnels of 8.85 km long, 11 bridges of 2.64 km long), and nine new wildlife underpasses.
Eurasia

The Marsican Bear (Ursus arctos marsicanus) of the Italian Appennini Mountains: an imperiled population

Brunella Visaggi
Gruppo di Ricerca e Conservazione dell’Orso Bruno del Parco Naturale Adamello Brenta
Group for the Research and Conservation of the Brown Bear in the Natural Park Adamello Brenta
Trento, Italy
Email: orso@pnab.it
or brunellav@libero.it

At the beginning of October, in the National Park of Abruzzi, Lazio and Molise in the Appennini mountains in Italy, where a small population of brown bears is present, 3 adult bears were found dead ... and not of natural causes. The finding was possible because one of the three bears was equipped with a radio-collar and was monitored by a team of scientists working on a project aimed at conserving this important population of bears.

The carcass of the radio-collared bear was found next to that of another bear. After this finding, a forest service team located a third carcass. The third bear was younger than the other two. According to the forest service investigators the bears died because they were poisoned. In the areas frequented by the bears, pieces of goat kill filled with poison were found and are believed to have caused the death of the three bears.

The news is even more alarming given that a few weeks before, in the same area, two dead bear cubs were found. They most likely died of natural causes. Unfortunately, the poison filled goat not only killed the bears but the forest service also found two wolf and two wild boar carcasses. Based on the initial analyses it appears strychnine, a poison that is easy to obtain in Italy, was used. Debate over the motivations and consequences of this serious episode is ongoing. However, considering that the population of Marsican bears is already very small (approximately 30-40 bears), it seems evident that the loss of three adults (and two cubs) may have dire consequences for Marsican bear conservation efforts.

Americas

White Black Bear Cub Sighted Near Yellowknife, Northwest Territories

Dean Cluff
Environment and Natural Resources Government of the Northwest Territories, Canada
Phone: +1 867-873-7783
Email: dean_cluff@gov.nt.ca

A white black bear cub was sighted about 70 km northeast of Yellowknife on May 8, 2007 (G. Furniss, pers. comm.). Observed from a helicopter, the cub was presumed to be a yearling based on body size. Two other black colored bears were with it (see photo), one was a yearling (presumably its sibling) and the other an adult (presumably the mother of the two cubs).

The unusual coloring of the white cub is likely caused by a rare genetic mutation best known in the Kermode black bear population on the west coast of British Columbia (Ritland et al. 2001, Marshall & Ritland 2002). The white cub did not appear to be an albino. Those who saw the white bear that day and my subsequent examination of the photographs they took, suggested some dark pigmentation on the nose, eyes and paws, and therefore its condition was inconsistent with albinism (Witkop et al. 1989).

I asked wildlife officers within the Department of Environment and Natural Resources if similar sightings of white colored black bears have been seen before in the Northwest Territories (NWT). One officer responded that on 18 May 2007, he saw a white black bear from the road just inside Wood Buffalo National Park near Fort Smith, NWT. The officer estimated this bear was three years old and did not believe it was an albino (J. Hordal, pers. comm.). Unfortunately, no pictures were taken. This second sighting is approximately 320 km south of the May 8th sighting by Yellowknife.

I later announced these rare bear sightings on local radio and television. In those interviews I requested that people contact me if they knew of any other occasions of white colored black bears, but I received none. Although the media announcements had the potential to reach people throughout the NWT, there is no way of knowing how many people heard the news then and who could have information to share. However, at this time it appears these sightings are the first documented occurrences of white colored black bears in the Northwest Territories.

I am aware of only two other reported occurrences of white colored black bears east of the Rocky Mountains. In an interview in 1983, police officer and naturalist Hugh Green recalled seeing several times in 1935/36, a white black bear near Whitewater Lake in Riding Mountain National Park, Manitoba (P. Paquet,
pers. comm.). According to Green, black bears were also uncommon in the park at the time (P. Paquet, pers. comm.). The second occurrence was also in Manitoba but more recent. In May 2004, a cub was sighted and photographed near The Pas as the cub and its mother fed frequently along the highway (Province of Manitoba 2004). Unfortunately, the mother bear was killed when hit by a vehicle on 11 July 2004 (Province of Manitoba 2004). The white female cub, named Maskwa, was subsequently captured and placed in a Winnipeg zoo where she continues to live today and retains the white coloration (V. Crichton, Manitoba Conservation, Winnipeg, MB, pers. comm.).

Neither of the two white colored black bears in the NWT has been re-sighted recently. However, both are young bears and could easily be seen again in the near future. The white coloration of the two NWT black bears and the two Manitoba black bears are certainly rare. The allele responsible for the white pelage probably occurs at a very low frequency in all populations beyond the isolated Kermode bear range, but because of its rarity, having homozygous individuals to express that allele would be the exception.

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Shaenandhoa García-Rangel
Wildlife Research Group
University of Cambridge
Email: sg343@cam.ac.uk

Edgard Yerena
Departamento de Estudios Ambientales
Universidad Simón Bolívar
Email: eyerena@usb.ve

Dorixa Monsalve Dam
Laboratorio de Conservación y Manejo de Fauna Silvestre
Universidad Simón Bolívar
Email: axirod@yahoo.com

Denis Torres
Fundación Andígena
www.andigena.org
Email: fundacion_andigena@yahoo.com

Andres Eloy Bracho
Parque Zoológico y Botánico Bararida
Email: andresbracho@cantv.net

Zoyla Martínez
Fundación para la Defensa de la Naturaleza

Isis Gómez
Fundación para la Defensa de la Naturaleza

Andean bear populations in Venezuela are presently distributed along the Cordillera de Mérida, the Sierra de Periá and in the Macizo de El Tamá, across forests, páramos (high-elevation shrub-lands) and semi-arid zones [1-4]. Since the 1980s, poaching and habitat destruction have increasingly jeopardized the species survival [3-5]. Thus, in 1994, the “Grupo Ad Hoc de Especialistas del Oso Frontino” (“Ad Hoc Group of Andean Bear Specialists”) (GEOF-Venezuela) developed the first Andean Bear Action Plan for Venezuela, reviewing the species distribution, status, threats and establishing guidelines for its conservation [5]. Research projects, management plans and environmental education programmes were carried out within its framework of recommendations, and the Andean bear was established as symbol of nature conservation across the country [5]. In 2005, a decade after the publication of the first Action Plan, the national scientific community felt the need to re-evaluate the species’ conservation status, given ongoing threats. Thus, we embarked on the task of up-dating this document.

After several months of gathering information, in July 2005 we conducted a workshop to generate the first draft of the updated Action Plan. “Estrategias para la Conservación del Oso Andino en Venezuela” (Strategies for Andean-Bear Conservation in Venezuela) brought together national and regional decision-making authorities, zoological institutions, NGOs, universities, Andean-bear scientists, students, local organized groups and interested communities [6, 7] (Figure 1). Full-sessions on in-situ and ex-situ conservation, management and research, education and legislation were conducted in order to identify needs, establish future objectives, define required activities, and set a clear framework for their development [4, 6, 7].
A second workshop, “Taller de Validación del Plan de Acción para la Conservación del Oso Andino en Venezuela” (Workshop for the Validation of the Action Plan for Andean Bear Conservation in Venezuela) was carried in June 2006 to review the materials compiled and to discuss final comments and recommendations [4, 7]. In June 2007, and after long months of editing, the final version of the Action Plan for Andean-Bear Conservation in Venezuela (2006–2016) was published online (http://oso.shroom.net/docs/poave.pdf) (Figure 2). This product was long awaited, and we are certain that it will strengthen our efforts to ensure the preservation of the most emblematic creature in the Andes mountain range.

Below we summarize some of the key issues highlighted in this document, since it is presently available in Spanish only. Donations to fund an English translation are greatly appreciated, and may be sent to Shaenandhoa García-Rangel, Wildlife Research Group - The Anatomy School, University of Cambridge, Cambridge - UK CB2 3DY, sg343@cam.ac.uk.

The Action Plan was divided into four main strategies that define the general framework under which objectives and activities were organized. Thus, we use the same scheme in the following synopsis.

First Strategy. In-situ Management, Conservation and Research

Objective 1
- Evaluation and reduction of the poaching threat.

Poaching rates appear to be reduced across the species’ range, but no reliable assessments have been undertaken and human-bear conflicts are still an important threat, especially across the páramos and transitional zones where extensive cattle grazing is a common practice. Thus, the impacts of this threat need to be evaluated carefully and its effects tackled in parallel, through the following actions:

- Focus research on characterizing and evaluating poaching events, identifying rates, proximate and ultimate causes and geographical locations.
- Evaluate current land-use schemes and develop compatible alternatives for resource use.
- Incorporate sustainable development alternatives into local communities through capacity-building.

Objective 2
- Ensure sufficient habitat to support viable Andean bear populations.

Despite of the establishment of 12 National Parks (NP) and 2 Natural Monuments (NM), encompassing 14,300 km² within the species’ national distribution across the country, effective protection of its habitat is far from being achieved (Figure 3). The total area protected is estimated not to be enough to secure a viable population, and the current levels of fragmentation are threatening both the integrity and persistence of bear habitat.

Thus, it is essential to ensure the protection of (Figure 3):

- Areas surrounding Guaramacal NP.
- Natural habitat north of the Perijá NP.
- The Ramal de Calderas Corridor, linking Guaramacal NP, Teta de Niquitao-Guirigay NM and Sierra Nevada NP.
- The Pueblos del Sur Corridor, connecting Sierra Nevada NP and Páramos de Batallón y La Negra NP.
- The Sierra de Portuguesa Corridor, between Terepaima, Yacambú and El Guache NPs.
Figure 3. Andean-bear distribution across the Venezuelan Andes.

a) States within the Venezuelan Andes.

b) Available Andean-bear habitat based on forest cover only. Protected areas with National Parks and Natural Monuments names and numbers for high-priority areas. Sánchez-Mercado. Generated from moderate-resolution remote-sensing imagery.
by government bodies at all levels tend to collide and usually supersede established protections. Thus, it is necessary to generate a more coherent, continuous and solid conservation policy, in which national and local authorities are encompassed. In addition, the institutional, operational and judicial framework regarding environment and biodiversity preservation should also be strengthened across the different levels of decision-making. Communities, organized groups and NGOs need to become active monitors of government actions. Priority actions include:

- Establishment of a legal regime to protect the areas referred to in the First Strategy, according to the current “Ley de Diversidad Biológica” (“Biodiversity Law”): corridors and buffer zones.
- Development and approval of Master Plans and Specific Regulations for each of the 14 protected areas across the species range.

Third Strategy:
Education, Awareness and Community Participation

Objective
- Increase public awareness on the importance and benefits of the conservation of the Andean bear and its habitat, motivating active participation and sustainable resource use.

In Venezuela, environmental education regarding the Andean bear started in 1987, with a broad campaign highlighting the species presence within the country. Subsequently, a wide variety of programmes and materials have been developed in parallel with the expansion of the system of protected areas. Together with NGOs, zoos have also played an important role in these initiatives, developing projects involving primary schools and teacher training. International support and funding have been key to the success of these initiatives, but the interest and collaboration from national education authorities have been limited, and in many cases an obstacle. In order to secure biodiversity conservation in Venezuela, social change towards the recognition and appreciation of the country’s natural patrimony needs to be promoted. Thus, an environmental educational strategy has to be developed to reach all levels of formal education, and to synchronize all possible actors. Key activities regarding the species involve:

- Inclusion of content-specific Andean-bear conservation topics in both formal and informal education systems.
- Development of educational plans targeting rural communities within the species distribution, incorporating their own perceptions and needs regarding the surrounding environment.
- Addressing specifically the issue of poaching among rural communities.
- Empowering local zoos in their establishment as centres for environmental education.

Fourth Strategy:
Ex-situ Conservation

Objective
- Capacity building for the management of the captive population, allowing synchrony between in-situ and ex-situ conservation strategies, and contribution to environmental education programs.

Historically, a total of 37 Andean bears have been kept in Venezuelan zoos. In 1991, when interest in this species’ conservation started booming, only two zoos included this bear species within their collections and the reproductive success was null.
However, during the following years and after improvements in captive conditions, 14 cubs were born, nine of which survived after the first six months. In parallel, the “Grupo de Trabajo de Oso Andino en Venezuela” (GTOV-AVZA) (Venezuelan Andean Bear Working Group of the Venezuelan Association of Zoos and Aquaria) was established to develop management guidelines for the captive population. In recent years, the country has reported one of the highest reproductive rates for Andean bears in captivity (1.07 bear/zoo/year) and the lowest newborn mortality (35.7%). The current captive population is very small and relatively young, with a favorable sex ratio, and a positive rate in population growth due to rescued animals. However, an in-depth genetic analysis carried out in 2005, revealed representation biases, low founder representation and high mean kinship [8]. Thus, the GTOV decided to stop breeding temporarily, to focus future activities on supporting in-situ conservation, organizing a coherent captive management plan, and on expanding the available infrastructure to increase the presently-exceeded carrying capacity. Future steps for the captive population include:

• Expand available infrastructure and include new institutions in cooperative Andean-bear captive management.
• Incorporate new individuals into the population from rescue actions and/or international exchange to improve its genetic condition.

• Promote effective coordination between institutions.
• Develop education programmes, and fund raising strategies.
• Integration in-situ and ex-situ conservation efforts.

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References


For this column, we decided to include a column that would give us some inside perspective from a student. Not only is the column interesting, but it also encourages other students who might be wondering some of the same things as IBA student, Ximena Velez-Liendo, writes about in her work with the Andean Bear. A couple of things are worth noting in Ximena’s experience: first, she didn’t let anything stop her (not even funding), and she’s certainly not afraid to climb steep mountains (physical and mental). Second, she knew what was in her heart, and she went for it. In my own experiences as a professor and advisor, you can’t image how many people I run into who turn back at the slightest hindrance or delay. Not everything is handed to us on a silver platter, and not all projects depend on whether the IBA Grants Committee (or others) approves your funding. Ximena will go very far in her career because she has the ONE characteristic that is vitally important to her success: perseverance. I hope you enjoy her story as much as I did.

Student Contribution
Ximena Velez-Liendo, Bolivia

Sometimes, many times actually, as I was in the middle of the forest looking for bear hairs I asked myself: “what am I doing here?? I should be rather in the city or working in a lab!” But, as soon as I find that path, and then that tree mark, and then that bromeliad, and yes, that hair, I realized two things. The first was that I don’t like labs, and the second was how lucky I was to have the opportunity to be in the habitat of an Andean bear.

I have been working with bears for the past eight years, and it has never been easy. First, I had to deal with my zero experience in the field and little knowledge in bear biology. My first lesson in the field was how to walk in steep mountain terrain. I fell hundred of times, rolled over like a ball, destroyed many trousers and got innumerable bruises. But, I learned that walking slightly leaning into the mountain and holding onto plants at the base makes the walk more easy and safe. Then, of course, I did what every first-time student should do: learn from the locals or, if you are lucky, have one as your guide. Lesson number two: bear sign. How do I recognize a bear sign if I never seen one? Well, of course I read field guides and learned some of the descriptions that gave me a vague idea of what an Andean bear footprint might look like. Then I went to the experts who pointed out that a bear sign is very easy to recognize, that I should focus on the “unusual.” Look for the unusual? My first day in the field, my friend (a more experienced biology student) and I finished our 40 minutes of packing our 40-50 kg into our camp site. At the moment that we stop to breathe, we saw our first “unusual” sign: a black-fluffy creature defecating 50 meters from our campsite. I had seen my first two “unusual” signs in
one instant: a real bear and my first “indirect sign” in the form of a scat. Thirteen months later, my field work was finished, and I had accumulated hundreds of indirect signs, and three direct observations, two of them females with cubs. However, after I finished my data analysis, we determined that my results were biased! The aim was to characterize and analyze the habitat of the Andean bear, including the analysis of habitat preferences. I did the habitat characterization, but I realized that the data collected was biased for grasslands, thus my preference analysis was obviously showing a high preference for grasslands. Although, theoretically the method was correct, the rate of sign encounter was higher in grassland than in forests. This, of course, was because in an open area your visual scan is better than in a dense forest. So I ended up with a clear “preference” of grassland over forest. In reality, the Andean bear in that particular region does not have a preferred habitat. They use both habitats for foraging and shelter. Although forests provide more “protection,” and the grasslands provide food (bromeliads), both were equally used and preferred by the bear. Nevertheless, I wrote a thesis, passed my defense and got a degree.

After my bachelor degree, I moved up to the northern hemisphere (United Kingdom) to work with lesser fluffy creatures and much simpler ones: computers. I obtained a degree in GIS which, I have to say, has been my “salvation” in terms of short-term jobs. At the beginning, I wasn’t happy about this course because I wanted to continue working with bears and conservation. However my best friend told me something extremely useful: “think of your career as a toolbox. Fill your biology toolbox not only with pure biology, but with other bits too.” So, I opted for the degree and ended up with two very useful tools in my box: GIS and English.

I returned home and started writing proposals to work with Andean bears and GIS. Thanks to my GIS knowledge, I managed to get a part time job and wrote an application merging GIS and bears. I didn’t get the grant, but then I decide to use my own money and start the project. I knew that my resume was too weak and needed some improvement, so I funded my own project to invest in myself. The aim of my proposal was to update the distribution of the Andean bear in Bolivia, but this time I used my GIS skills to build and visualize maps of potential bear locations and multi-temporal analysis of deforestation of the Andes. This last study was in fact very important for my “fund-hunting” because merging “key” subjects enhances your chance to get funds. How does it work? Well in my case, I knew that humans were expanding into pristine habitats as a results of socio-economic policies (another tool that I added into my biology toolbox: social-economic studies), and that expansion was reducing the habitat of the bear. So my proposals were focused on determining the role of human activities and how much habitat remained for the Andean bear in Bolivia. Although I really wanted to focus more on bear biology, I knew that funding for biology projects were very limited. Thus I use my biology, GIS, and socio-economic knowledge to write a proposal of “applied conservation biology.” Also, I reached the point where I was in desperate need of a job, so I decided to apply for a PhD scholarship. So, a 4-year “job” plus an extra degree wasn’t a bad idea at all. I applied for several small and quietly ambitious positions with no results, but I kept applying. Meanwhile, I did whatever I could to acquire money for my project, including teaching at the University! Poor creatures ... I’m possibly one of the least skilled teachers they’d ever had. In the meanwhile I obtained a grant from the IBA to work
Student Forum Highlights

By Brian Schieck

Student research is often reported to the IBA newsletter’s Regional News section and the Student Forum section also highlights graduate students who are doing great bear work around the world. However, once students graduate, some of them seem to disappear. The student highlights will continue, but periodically we may include updates on students who successfully evolved into professionals working on bears. If you know of a recent graduate who has made this leap, or if you are one, email details to Brian Schieck at Brian.Scheick@MyFWC.com.

Student Forum Highlight #1

Steven Dobey

Wildlife Program Coordinator
Kentucky Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources
Email: steven.dobey@ky.gov

Steven Dobey joined the ongoing study of the Population Ecology of Black Bears in the Okefenokee Swamp - Oseola Ecosystem in June 1997 as a student of Michael Pelton; he defended his thesis in December 2001. Immediately after his defense, he stayed in Knoxville as Research Associate with Joe Clark at U.S.G.S.’s Southern Appalachian Field Laboratory to complete the project’s report, which was published as a wildlife monograph (Dobey et al. 2005). After the publication and end of this contract, he worked on the experimental release of elk into the Great Smoky Mountain National Park as a Research Assistant for the University of Tennessee. In 2004 Steven was hired by the National Park Service as the Elk Research Coordinator for the Great Smokey Mountains National Park. In November 2005 he was hired as Wildlife Program Coordinator with Kentucky Dept. of Fish & Wildlife Resources where he also serves as the state black bear biologist. Steve and I worked on the same project during our graduate research. I thought he’d just gotten this Kentucky job last year, time sure flies.

Student Forum Highlight #2

Kim Annis

Grizzly Bear Conflict Management Specialist
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Email: kannis@mt.gov

Kim Annis worked with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission from 2002-2004, and began her masters work with Mel Sunquist at the University of Florida in 2004. After several years of field work, she completed her thesis “The Impact of Translocation on Nuisance Florida Black Bears” in September 2007. Prior to her defense, Kim landed a job as the Grizzly Bear Conflict Management Specialist in Libby, Montana with the Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks. She just recently captured a female grizzly with two cubs in Noxon, a small community in northwestern Montana. This is the first collared sow grizzly south of the Clark Fork River outside of the Cabinet-Yaak Recovery Area and will be monitored in cooperation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service; the grizzly family was released in the same area.
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Student List Serve
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- For students only
- Discussions pertaining to bear biology, management, or study design challenges
- Assistance with proposals and study design through IBA professionals
- Job searches, announcements, information regarding the IBA and student membership
- Planning for IBA student activities and meetings
- IBA membership is *encouraged*, but not required for initial sign-up

Instructions

- Contact Diana Doan-Crider at d-crider@tamuk.edu to enroll
- After enrollment, go to: http://aristotle.tamuk.edu
- Click on Agricultural Lists
- Click on Truman
- Enter your email address and the password "Bears01"
- Go to Create Message
- If you’re a new member, please submit a paragraph about your project and include your contact information so we can all get to know you.
- Do NOT reply to list serve messages using your “reply” button. You must return to Truman and respond within the list serve or else other members will not receive your response.
Ecology of Sloth Bears

Landscape characteristics of sloth bear range in Sri Lanka • Shyamala Ratnayake, Frank T. van Manen, Rohan Pieris, and V. S. J. Pragash

Characteristics of sloth bear day dens and use in disturbed and unprotected habitat of North Bilaspur Forest Division, Chhattisgarh, central India • Naim Akhtar, Harendra Singh Bargali and N.P.S. Chauhan

Management

Systematic collection of bear–human interaction information for Alaska’s national parks • James M. Wilder, Terry D. Debruyn, Tom S. Smith and Angie Southwould

How agencies respond to human–black bear conflicts: a survey of wildlife agencies in North America • Rocky D. Spencer, Richard A. Beausoleil, and Donald A. Martorello

An automated system for detecting and reporting trespassing bears in Yosemite National Park • Stewart W. Breck, Nathan Lance, Jean Bourassa, Sean Matthews, and Victoria Seher

Instructions for Contributors to Ursus

Recent Bear Literature

November 2007

Richard B. Harris

Ursus Editor
218 Evans
Missoula, Montana 59801 USA

Tanya Rosen

Bard Center for Environmental Policy
Bard College
Annandale-on-Hudson
New York 12504 USA


This book is full of incredible details on managed and mismanaged wildlife and natural resources. This convincing text comes from two acknowledged experts who have been within the wildlife management circles for over 30 years. This book will hopefully lighten up the entrenched old-fashioned sections of the wildlife community. The authors state that "the traditional resource coterie tends to resist change. It has a high level of internal coherence and devotion to a well-defined philosophy, and is led by individuals educated in an earlier age".

The book offers 14 chapters showing shockingly how far away we still are from a truly sustainable wildlife management, e.g. as requested by the Rio Convention 1992, by common knowledge and by textbooks of science-based resource management taught at universities. Chapters 5 (European Trade) & 6 (Exploration and Settlement) expose our recent globalization as a simple repeat of history. I suggest Chapter 12 (Broadening Conservation and Wildlife) as a required reading for any scholar of wildlife and natural resource administration.

The authors write how the widely heralded concept of 'multiple use' often simply meant nothing else than: 'Fiber first, and wildlife last'. During the 218 pages of fascinating text the authors destroy the Myth of Superabundance of wildlife in North America. The book makes a strong case that the natural environment is a vital component of the human environment. It shows nicely that the developed nations have 22% of the world's human population, but use 88% of worlds' resources, 73% of its energy, and generate most of its waste and pollution; whereas 78% of the world population consumes only 12% of earth resources. Instead of calling the Third World 'less developed', the authors suggest to call them 'less consumptive' (and consequently the western world 'more consumptive').

Perhaps some readers would not expect such revolutionary and 'challenge the hierarchy' thinking and statements from authors that are Vietnam veterans. But these successful Wildlife Managers with an emeritus status, one of them a former Aldo Leopold student, have gone environmental for a good reason: our current economy regime harms wildlife and habitats alike. The authors do a brilliant job in summarizing their own research work as well as the current wildlife habitat dilemma of the second millennium. For instance, one reads throughout the book that market incentives fail too often to conserve or use biodiversity on a sustainable level, "...they even facilitate degradation of ecosystems and depletion of species". The authors provide a brilliant analysis and description of furbearers, and how they affected the global community: already by 1840 beavers became commercially extinct, almost world-wide!

This book is one of the best reads as a resource for wildlife management and related issues I am aware of. As the Hawaiian example shows, "Captain Cooke opened the way to the extinction of 90% of the indigenous species of birds ... and introduced species (870 plants, 2000 invertebrates, 80 vertebrates)". Within only 20 years of its discovery by the western world, Steller’s sea cow became extinct; it took approximately 100 years for the sea otter. Asian Lions were found for thousands of years all over Asia, Africa and southern Europe; but in recent times they got reduced decade after decade and are now only found in India. 'Among the American colonies, local extirpation was the order of the day'. It's simply part of the 'American way of life'. Settling the U.S. automatically meant extirpation for species such as moose, elk, bison, white-tailed deer, wild turkey and beaver.

This book brings interesting native issues to the forefront as well: refugees along native tribe borders always had enough deer and wildlife since they represented an 'unused grey-zone'. But their wildlife abundances crashed immediately once tribe borders changed. European furbearers brought human diseases into the huge land previously dominated by natives. Subsequently, that reduced native hunting pressure on wildlife, e.g. bison populations sextupled! Nowadays, natives face two options: merge with dominant industrial culture, or adapt their traditional culture to new conditions.

The authors show that federal public lands are under direct control of the president of the United States via U.S. federal agencies (e.g. U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) and U.S. Bureau of Land Management (USBLM)). However, only 3% of the United States is actually protected (whereas 12% of Costa Rica is). Further, "most private land in U.S., more over the half total, is managed on economic principles within short time frames and with no discernable concern for human welfare in other than monetary terms, or for ecological sustainability."

Very enlightening are also the presented views and constraints about the wildlife and management profession itself: a manager supporting species extinction in a public agency is still irreplaceable, blocking
progress and contributing to the Cult of Incompetence which is nowadays widely seen in governmental agencies. The authors provide plenty of examples. “Biologists closest to the natural behavior of endangered species have encountered the natural behavior of government agencies and its negative consequences for species recovery”.

The authors emphasize “...the ancient continuing tendency towards Tribalism” in the wildlife discipline: especially young men follow agencies and clubs, including their agendas such as provided by professors, coop units, USFWS and CWS.

The authors further state that many national leaders were former soldiers, and this can affect wildlife due to the hereditary soldier-rule and aristocrat views, which got directly imposed onto the environment then, and onto its legal administration.

I really liked the great descriptions and summaries of legal events allowing to put wildlife management in a policy context: By 1969 the U.S. just had experienced three decades of unparalleled prosperity when the U.S. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) was initiated with the U.S. National Council on Environmental Quality (NCEQ) overseeing this process. But land management agencies often had no clue about the actual land content as they only managed for timber, grass, flood control, military ranges etc.

The book certainly presents in detail another global milestone legislation introduced in 1971: The U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA). But progress on recovery of endangered species is slow due to too many bureaucratic hurdles, and due to a slow listing process and inadequate funding of the act. Right now 600 Category I species await listing, 3000 Category II species still await research and sound assessment.

Habitat issues get well covered, and authors promote co-management of the land. They show that it is a huge shortcoming for wildlife that the U.S. has an ESA but not a Habitat or Ecosystem Act.

Chapter I on International Wildlife Conservation is an outstanding read. The global goal still appears to be turning everything into sustainable use; failures of TRAFFIC and CITES conventions administering this movement are shown. Authors present that USAID as a development agency has been heavily involved in hydropower projects world-wide. The role of IUCN, Red Data Book, Survival Service Commission, WCMC, WWF and IWC gets discussed in detail, too.

This book shows that whatever happens in the U.S. will eventually happen in Canada as well. It also shows that Canada is way behind when it comes to Wildlife Management, and that it is certainly not world-leading, e.g. the Canadian Environment Act got implemented as late as 1993. However, with Canada following U.S. almost blindly, at least consistency is assured across the North American continent, e.g. when compared to the diverse, if not even chaotic, policies in the E.U.

Tiny organizational issues aside, this is an environmental history book "par excellence". As a wildlife practitioner myself, I am extremely grateful that these two very experienced authors with highest academic ranking devoted the book to ‘... students and field biologists acting under often trying circumstances to strengthen the factual base for sustained positive relations between human and other forms of life.’ Unfortunately, so far, the current facts and global political climate are just showing pure denial of facts presented in this book, hinting towards a period of ‘intellectual stagnation’. As a reviewer, I recommend nothing more than buying this book and implementing its lessons learnt today.

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Bear Trust International Announces Publication of The Bear Book

The Bear Book has just been published by Bear Trust International, a nonprofit wildlife conservation organization headquartered in Missoula, Montana. The idea for the book was hatched at the 2004 IBA conference in San Diego. Here, over breakfast one morning, a group of conference attendees were recounting their personal experiences with bears when someone (most agree it was spectacled bear expert Bernie Peyton) said, “We should compile a book of bear stories.” Bear Trust thought this sounded like a good idea, and decided to undertake the project. In October, The Bear Book was published and will be available at the IBA conference in Monterrey, Mexico. The book is a compilation of bear stories, essays, photographs, and other features—something for everyone. Information about purchasing the book can be found at www.beartrust.com.
Communications

KBCS Receives F&WS Grant for Bear-resistant Containers

George Matz, Project officer &
Roberta Highland, President &
Mike Edwards, F&WS Project officer

Kachemak Bay Conservation Society
3734 Ben Walters Lane
Homer, AK 99603 USA
Phone: +1 907-235-9344
Email: geomatz@alaska.net

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service’s (F&WS) Private Stewardship Grant Program1 recently awarded the Kachemak Bay Conservation Society (KBCS) a $100,000 grant to reduce the occurrence of bear-related problems in the Homer area that can be attributed to garbage, pet foods and other attractants. The grant will provide local residents with bear-resistant garbage containers at a reduced price and include a public education program about avoiding bear conflicts. This program will be patterned after the Wildlife Conservation Community Program (WCCP) developed by Alaska Department of Fish and Game (ADF&G) and successfully implemented in 2005 in the Kenai area. Partners in the Homer effort include ADF&G staff in Soldotna and Homer, Quick Sanitation in Homer, and Audubon Alaska in Anchorage.

The bear-resistant containers are manufactured by BearSaver in Ontario, CA and made of a durable plastic with a lid that bears have not been able to open. The cost of the container exceeds $250, but will be available to 99603 zip code residents for only $50. Only one container per household will be allowed.

As part of a pilot project to determine interest in this program, the Kenai WCCP recently loaned KBCS forty 95 gallon containers. These are immediately available and can be picked between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. Monday through Friday at Moore and Moore Services (Quick Sanitation) located on the Sterling Highway about ½ mile north of the borough landfill. First come first served, while they last. Call Kelly or Michelle at 235-8837 for more details.

The public education effort will include sending each Homer household the acclaimed booklet “Living in Harmony with Bears” written by Homer resident Derek Stonorov for Audubon Alaska and several other agencies and organizations. The booklet includes the do’s and don’t’s of living in bear country.

One factor that helped with the grant was that the Homer City Council demonstrated its intent to deal with bear/garbage problems by passing an ordinance (06-31) last year “prohibiting the creation or maintenance of a bear attraction nuisance.” Violations could result in a fine of not less than $250 and not more than $500 if the offense is committed intentionally, knowingly, recklessly, or with criminal negligence; or not less than $50 and not more than $300 if the offense is not intentional. The bear-resistant containers, which cost less than the fine, will enable Homer residents to comply with the ordinance.

1 The Private Stewardship Grant Program is one of a variety of tools under the F&WS Endangered Species Act that helps private landowners plan and implement projects that benefit at-risk and federally listed, endangered, threatened, or candidate species.

Attention Yellowstone Bear Researchers!

The National Park Service, with funding from the Yellowstone Park Foundation, is currently seeking interview subjects for a multi-year project chronicling the history of bear management in the park through the collection of oral history interviews. If you have a story to tell, or want to know more, please contact the project leader, Charissa Olson Reid, at +1 307-344-2260 or by email: Charissa_Reid@nps.gov.

Events

10th Western Black Bear Workshop

May 18 – 21, 2009

The 10th Western Black Bear Workshop will be hosted by the Nevada Department of Wildlife in the Reno/Tahoe area from May 18 – 21, 2009. The meeting will be held at the Peppermill Hotel Casino in Reno (http://www.peppermillreno.com). Rooms have been contracted at about US$70/night single or double. Please feel free to send suggestions on a theme, comments on past workshops, or any other information you feel is important. Contact Carl Lackey at cdembears@aol.com or +1 775-720-6130.
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** Please indicate number of years of experience with each species

* Indicates an IBA committee

Please check all academic degrees earned: □ BA/BS □ MA/MS □ PhD/DVM □ Other (list)

Please list major field of study ____________________________________________

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How can IBA better serve its membership and/or help you? ________________________________

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<td>A Proposed Delineation of Critical Grizzly Bear Habitat in the Yellowstone Region by F. Craighead (#1, 1977)</td>
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<td>The Status and Conservation of the Bears of the World by C. Servheen (#2, 1989)</td>
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Harry Reynolds, President 
PO Box 80843
Fairbanks AK 99708, USA
Phone: +1 907-479-5169
Email: ibapresident@bearbiology.com

Piero Genovesi, Vice President for Eurasia
INFS-National Wildlife Institute
Via Ca’ Fornacetta 9
I-40064 Ozzano Emilia BO, Italy
Phone: +39 051 6512228
Fax: +39 051 796628
Email: piero.genovesi@infs.it

Karen Noyce, Vice President for Americas
Minnesota Dept. of Natural Resources
1201 East Highway 2
Grand Rapids MN 55744, USA
Phone: +1 218-327-4432
Fax: +1 218-327-4181
Email: karen.noyce@dnr.state.mn.us

Joseph Clark, Secretary
U.S. Geological Survey
Southern Appalachian Field Laboratory
University of Tennessee
274 Ellington Hall
Knoxville TN 37996, USA
Phone: +1 865-974-4790
Fax: +1 865-974-3555
Email: jclark1@utk.edu

Frank van Manen, Treasurer
U.S. Geological Survey
Southern Appalachian Field Laboratory,
University of Tennessee
274 Ellington Hall
Knoxville TN 37996, USA
Phone: +1 865-974-0200
Fax: +1 865-974-3555
Email: vanmanen@utk.edu

Andrew Derocher
Department of Biological Science
University of Alberta
Edmonton, Alberta T6G 2E9, Canada
Phone: +1 780-492-5570
Fax: +1 780-492-9234
Email: derocher@ualberta.ca

Isaac Goldstein
Wildlife Conservation Society
PO Box 833
IPOSTEL Merida
Estado Merida, Venezuela
Phone: +58 414-717692
Email: igoldstein@wcs.org

John Hechtel
Alaska Department of Fish and Game
1800 Glenn Highway, Suite 4
Palmer AK 99645, USA
Phone: +1 907-746-6305
Email: john_hechtel@fishgame.state.ak.us

Djuro Huber
University of Zagreb
Biological Department, Veterinary Faculty
Heinzelova 55, 10000 Zagreb
Republic of Croatia
Phone: +385 1 2390 141
Fax: +385 1 244 1390
Email: huber@mavef.vef.hr

Ole Jakob Sorensen
Nord-trondelag University College
Faculty of Social Sciences and Natural Resources
Box 2501
N-7729 Steinkjer, Norway
Phone: +47 74112052
Fax: +47 74112101
Email: ole.j.sorensen@hint.no

Michael R. Vaughan
Virginia Cooperative Fish and Wildlife Research Unit
148 Cheatham Hall, Virginia Tech
Blacksburg VA 24061-0321, USA
Phone: +1 540-231-5046
Fax: +1 540-231-7580
Email: mvaughan@vt.edu

Koji Yamazaki
Zoological Laboratory
Ibaraki Nature Museum
700 Osaki
Iwai-city, Ibaraki 306-0622, Japan
Phone: +81 297 38 2000
Fax: +81 297 38 1999
Email: yamako@j.email.ne.jp

Diana Doan-Crider (non-voting)
IBA Student Affairs Coordinator
King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management
MSC 137
Texas A&M University-Kingsville
Kingsville TX 78363-8202, USA
Phone: +1 361-593-5407
Fax: +1 361-593-5404
Email: d-crider@tamuk.edu

Matthew E. Durnin (non-voting)
International Bear News Editor
California Academy of Sciences
Ornithology and Mammalogy
875 Howard St.
San Francisco CA 94103, USA
Phone: +1 415-321-8369
Fax: +1 415-321-8637
China Phone: +8 13701063064
Email: ibanews@bearbiology.com

Richard B. Harris (non-voting)
Ursus Editor
218 Evans
Missoula MT 59801, USA
Phone & Fax: +1 406-542-6399
Email: rharris@montana.com

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

The International Association for Bear Research and Management (IBA) is a non-profit tax-exempt organization (USA tax #94-3102570) open to professional biologists, wildlife managers, and others dedicated to the conservation of all bear species. The organization has over 550 members from over 50 countries. It supports the scientific management of bears through research and distribution of information. The IBA sponsors international conferences on all aspects of bear biology, ecology, and management. The proceedings are published as peer-reviewed scientific papers in the journal *Ursus*.

**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.

*Objectives:* In support of this goal, IBA’s objectives are to:

1. Promote and foster well-designed research of the highest professional standards.
2. Develop and promote sound stewardship of the world’s bears through scientifically based population and habitat management.
3. Publish and distribute, through its conferences and publications, peer-reviewed scientific and technical information of high quality addressing broad issues of ecology, conservation, and management.
4. Encourage communication and collaboration across scientific disciplines and among bear researchers and managers through conferences, workshops, and newsletters.
5. Increase public awareness and understanding of bear ecology, conservation, and management by encouraging the translation of technical information into popular literature and other media, as well as through other educational forums.
6. Encourage the professional growth and development of our members.
7. Provide professional counsel and advice on issues of natural resource policy related to bear management and conservation.
8. Maintain the highest standards of professional ethics and scientific integrity.
9. Encourage full international participation in the IBA through the siting of conferences, active recruitment of international members and officers, and through financial support for international research, travel to meetings, memberships, and journal subscriptions.
10. Through its integrated relationship with the Bear Specialist Group of the World Conservation Union (IUCN)/Species Survival Commission, identify priorities in bear research and management and recruit project proposals to the IBA Grants Program that address these priorities.
11. Build an endowment and a future funding base to provide ongoing support for IBA core functions and for the IBA Grants Program.
12. Support innovative solutions to bear conservation dilemmas that involve local communities as well as national or regional governments and, to the extent possible, address their needs without compromising bear conservation, recognizing that conservation is most successful where human communities are stable and can see the benefits of conservation efforts.
13. Form partnerships with other institutions to achieve conservation goals, where partnerships could provide additional funding, knowledge of geographical areas, or expertise in scientific or non-scientific sectors.

Deadline for the February 2008 issue is January 5, 2008

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