



## Presidents Column

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### AN INCREDIBLE OPPORTUNITY

The strategic membership survey carried out in 2015 has provided IBA with very valuable insights about how our membership views us as organization. Most notable, IBA's membership has expressed a desire to explore how IBA can become a more effective and global player in promoting science-based management and conservation of bears. An anonymous donor has generously stepped up and engaged the management consulting firm Oliver Wyman to complete a 10-12 week study of IBA to identify an approach to achieving these objectives. Oliver Wyman is a world-leading global management consultancy with a strong background in organizational effectiveness and strategy. Oliver Wyman will conduct this study "pro bono", i.e., it will be a free service to benefit IBA and society at large.

It is my belief that this represents a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for IBA to help shape a plan for the IBA's future organization and fundraising efforts while protecting its scientific integrity and member support. Oliver Wyman has asked IBA for a list of 20-30 key individuals as well as involved members, age geographic representation, to conduct in depth interviews. These interviews

- aim to evaluate the organizational structure and key challenges facing IBA,
- explore how far we want go in developing fundraising capabilities to increase IBA's outreach in science-based management and conservation of bear populations and their habitats,
- identify possible partners (e.g., foundations, individuals) to support fundraising or re-organization efforts,
- seek to crystallize the core message(s) to prospective donors related to the need for conservation and management efforts (e.g., "Why bear research and conservation is needed in this world"),
- lay out core tenets of a framework for evaluating and potentially prioritizing conservation initiatives for funding.

Based on feedback I have heard from other interviewees as well as based on personal experience, some of these questions were surprisingly hard to answer in a precise and concise fashion. For example, what narrative should be at the heart of the IBA pitch for support the need for bear research and conservation that most effectively distances the IBA's efforts from being perceived as an instance of "saving Bambi"? What is the broader ecological significance



of bears? How should we position our efforts to make it clear that they are not duplicative relative to other conservation organizations' efforts? I suspect that for most of us the answers to these questions are intuitively clear, however, that relating your thoughts in a convincing manner to a neutral audience is much more difficult.

My hope and expectation is that this review will help IBA to build a structure that allows us to grow as an organization and increases our conservation outreach while maintaining our core values that are rooted in a scientific understanding of bear ecology and management. We are very much looking forward to the recommendations by Oliver Wyman.

### **NEW FACES ON COUNCIL AND RATIFICATION OF BYLAWS**

IBA Council welcomes several new members. Mei-Hsiu Hwang has been elected as Vice President Eurasia. Mei-Hsiu is Associate Professor and Director of the Institute of Wildlife Conservation at the National Pingtung University of Science and Technology in Taiwan. She has dedicated herself to the conservation of the Asiatic/Formosan black bear. We also welcome new Council members Agnieszka (Aga) Sergiel and Marta de Barba. Aga is Assistant Professor at the Institute of Nature Conservation of Polish Academy of Sciences in Kraków, Poland. Her research focusses mainly on behavior and especially physiological indicators of stress in wild and captive bears. Marta is a research scientist at the Laboratory of Alpine Ecology at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique, Université Grenoble-Alpes, in Grenoble, France. Marta is a wildlife geneticist mainly working on brown bears. She is the heart, brains and soul of a large Europe-wide conservation project working on the functional connectivity of bear populations in Europe.

I would like to use the opportunity to express my gratitude to the departing Council members Klemen Jerina, Emre Can, and Santiago Molina. Thank you for your contribution to Council and IBA, and I hope that you will be able to contribute to IBA in a different function in the future.

IBA members have ratified changes to the IBA Bylaws. These new changes ensure a balanced turnover of Council seats during each election cycle. To facilitate this amendment, the Secretary and one Council seat currently in the America's cycle will transfer to the Eurasian election cycle in future elections.