



International Bear Foundation

Annual report of International Bear Foundation for 2019

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A) Introduction

1. Objectives of the Foundation:

Actively working on the maintenance of the habitat of the Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*); initiate plans and concepts to avoid animal abuse, illegal hunting and poaching.

Sharing worldwide knowledge and information through memberships of International Bear Association/ IUCN Bear Specialist Group and other relevant organizations

2. Board of the Foundation

Chairman of the Board	Mr. J.J.J. (Hans) Teunissen
Treasurer	Mrs. S. (Sabine) Boucherie
General board member	vacancy
Director of the foundation	Mr. G.M. (Gerard) Baars

Advisors of the Foundation

Mr. H. (Huub) Keulen	former chairman of RABO Groen Foundation
Mr. M. (Mike) Hirschler	Nature researcher



3. structure of International Bear Foundation

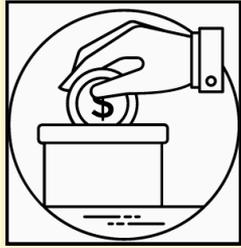
The board of the foundation is actively searching for additional board members. Certainly, if the B&H project will start, it is essential to have some more 'power' on board, both for the technical part of the project as well as for the promotional aspects. Moreover a board of advisors will be selected in order to support both the board of the foundation and its director in the 'on going' projects.

As communication is being an important part of the Foundation's activities, the development of a new website, a link to a fund raiser platform and other IT tools will be developed in the months to come.

4. Partnerships

The foundation will remain a liable partner in several partnerships, both on the European continent as world-wide. The focus of the links will be based on bear biology, human interest and the re-enforcement of nature (on behalf of both humans and wildlife).

B. Finance



In 2019 the foundation received a legacy that enabled the foundation to act in a somewhat more positive balance. Nevertheless the annual income of the foundation is based on donations, legacies and gifts. In order to create a more positive income it was decided to start an in-house campaign for raising funds. The treasurer and the foundation's director set up plans and now (start of 2020) a global approach has been developed, partly supported by external experts. Its objectives are to create links both to commercial, private and institutional bodies to allocate annually sufficient funding to continue the activities of the foundation. New larger projects normally will be financed by donors specially 'invited' to participate in the projects.



Foto: Ab Winkelman ©

C) Bears worldwide

The impact of bears in Europe

Due to degradation of habitat, growing economies, new urban developments and global warming, in general all these elements have an enormous impact on both flora and fauna.

Rather unspoiled regions can turn into a hostile landscape, just by creating new motorways or railway tracks; imagine the impact of artificial lakes and hydro dams.

Nevertheless, at least for Europe, the numbers of individual brown bears is not declining; the regions however where they live in are reducing. Therefore there is more pressure on each individual bear to find a new home range, often closer to human settlements.

As this is almost a circular arguments of reasoning and it creates more pressure on the human-bear co-existence, you can name any site in Europe where bears occur and you will be confronted with conflicts. Every gathering in any bear country will have this topic on top of their agenda. It is a pity that governments are quite reluctant to create a better platform to get the different parties around the table and discuss the options on how to create a better understanding and a willingness of those who live in bear regions to take various actions to protect their goods and to accept bears in their surroundings.

Casualties in nature conservation

Every year hundreds of conservationists, ranging from researchers to wardens in national parks, are injured or even killed during their professional activities. Mostly by poachers. But even legal field researchers using remote cameras can be taken to jail as being suspect of illegal spying activities!

Our Foundation has been in contact with both IUCN/BSG and IUCN-NL in order to find out what can be done and how to protect our colleagues better.

Publicity does not give back lives, but awareness and pressure on certain regimes can be helpful. At least more attention is paid on this subject, and hopefully less persons will become victims of hostile attacks.

France - Department of Ariège



Last year 2019 was meant to collect sufficient funding to start the preparations for the Processus-2 sessions. Due to the sudden death of Andre Rouch, the dynamic President of our partner Parc Regional d'Ariège, there was a stand still. And actually another barrier will be the upcoming elections (Spring 2020) on regional and municipal levels. Normally in France this will stop all controversial developments. So, nature conservation, biodiversity, protection of large carnivores, to name a few: no one will touch these subjects apart from the President of 'la douce France', who made clear that wolves death quota will raise to an abnormal high. For the Pyrenees this is really bad news as since 2019 there is scientific evidence that wolves have settled there. This creates a new target for hunters and agri-related business people. Hopefully there will be a break

through midst of 2020 as new actions to allocate funding are initiated.

Cooperation with AVES France

Until this year occasionally bears were shown at medieval festivals, on traditional markets and on various parts around the country. The people that were exploiting the bears were taken to court as there was a serious conviction that bears were not treated according to the species requirements, nor transported and presented safely, not for the bears themselves, nor for spectators during the performances. AVES France and various other ngo's fighting against these exploitations brought the owners to court and won.

Now there is almost no dancing bear in practise left. However in France there is no appropriate facility to relocate these traumatised bears. Our foundation has offered its expertise to find sufficient facilities and train staff to accommodate these bears. Moreover, because of the growth of the natural bear population and the incident of an orphaned bear cub in spring 2019, AVES and our foundation are working on a facility to accommodate orphaned bear cubs and train them to be released when the animal is ready for it. The optimum would be a larger site close to the original grounds at the piedmonts of the Pyrenees.



Bosnia-Herzegovina

The initiated project on 'coexistence of humans and bears (large carnivores) in Bosnia' is in a critical phase. On one side the fundraising for the project is ongoing and the necessary budgets to launch the project in its full capacity is over € 400.000,-. It is a hard work to select potential donors and to prepare the proposals. Our foundation hired a professional fundraiser to execute this part of the project. In January 2019 the team from Bosnia-Herzegovina was invited to come to the Netherlands and a 3 days conference was organized in Leiden. The initial programs were discussed. Moreover it became clear that the various subjects needed to be worked out in more detail. The concepts on communication, presented by a well-known Dutch education institute, turned out not to be appropriate to be executed in Bosnia. Therefore we asked the proposed project manager to come up with options that could be more feasible for the specific target groups and groups of interest. In November the president of the foundation and its director visited Banja Luka, the capital of Bosnia, and the place where both governmental institutes and universities were located for several days. One of the partners made a longer bus trip from Trebinje to Banja Luka to have his inputs in final programs. It is foreseen that based on the expectation on the reception of funds the project will start not earlier than end of 2020 or the beginning of 2021.



A group of 4 students, doing their masters in accountancy at the Hogeschool van Rotterdam, were asked to design a financial model based on the Bosnia project, to make visual the income, work and expenditures of each of the project sections done and surveyed by the local managers of the project. The data will be worked out by the project manager who will later on inform the treasurer of our foundation on the progress, the spendings and the issues that were or were not executed according to the planned proposals. End of December 2019 the students presented their draft plans and it seems to all exerts that the tools are helpful to create a simple and effective system to follow the money, to see the development of the projects and to present finally the results to the initial donors.

D) Initiatives and plans for 2020/2021



France

Based on the meetings in December 2019 the main focus of the partners in the Processus project is to raise sufficient funds to start with the second part of this Processus project 2 discussing biodiversity of the Pyrenees and the relationship between humans and large carnivores. The methods to be used will be different from the Processus 1 part. A mediator will travel in the region (department Ariège) and have in-depth conversations with all relevant groups of interest. The French government strongly advises us to create a new balance of trust between the focus groups as this could be the solution to create a mutual plan how to define biodiversity and how to solve the often hostile attitude of certain groups towards large carnivores

Professor Alister McBath guides a discussion during a Processus meeting in jan. 2017

Bosnia-Herzegovina

At this stage the project development is in a rather critical phase as the funding for the project is the 'missing link'. A professional fundraiser is actively searching for funding the project. Moreover, several parts of the project have to be worked out. This only can be done by our local partners. As few budgets are available for them to work on, we come up into a 'chicken/egg' situation. Who does what? Most of the initiatives are still directed by the office of International Bear Foundation. Based on the actual information the project will start end 2020 or early 2021

Follow up of Processus 2

According to the concept of the planning of the Foundation for 2019 it was an objective to create sufficient funding for the follow up of the Processus-2 in France. The management of the Parc Regional d'Ariège did a promise to start the fundraising activities for the Processus-2. Because of the unexpected and sad death of their chairman Andre Rouch, this process was delayed for many months. Moreover because of the various political discussions, from Paris to the local markets in the Pyrenees, there was no (not yet) sufficient support to join the Processus-2 initiative. Hopefully that after the regional elections in March 2020 there will be more room for such an initiative as the parties pro and opposing the scientific management plan of bears and other large carnivores are longing for a solution or at least for any solution.

On irregular basis our Foundation has participated in the various platforms of IBA and IUCN/BSG. Although our homeland has no bears, the input obtained elsewhere is rewarded.

Gerard Baars, director of IBF
Bennekom-NL, March 2020