CHRONICLE

Pivotal Challenges and Opportunities of the Wildlife Management

Wildlife is an integral part of ecosystems including forests and other non-forested lands. Forests are managed to provide not only timber but also a wide range of multifunctional benefits as non-wood products and services. Forests have considerable indigenous and cultural heritage values. One of following is hunting, whereas wildlife management is not only hunting per se as an activity that pointed to use game by seeking, lurking, stalking and shooting. Wildlife management is oriented to sustainable use and conservation of wildlife resources including the system of arrangements and economic measures to protect animals and their habitats, and improve habitat carrying capacity. Wildlife management combines entitlements and obligations of involved parties. There are a great deal of the legal and post-legislative acts that regulate wildlife use and their habitat protection. The main objects of wildlife management are game animals and their habitats. By the valid legal acts, game are referred to as the animal species that were hunted before, are hunted presently and could be hunted in future (*The Hunting Law* 2002). Game species encompass just half number of wild animals. As long-term human encroachment into wildlife habitats continues and is becoming more intense, animal habitats worldwide are being fragmented or destroyed that negatively affect wildlife populations. The policy of wildlife management would be to discourage unsustainable use of game resources. It aims to regulate the use of wildlife resources managing their populations qualitatively, quantitatively and territorially, maintaining diverse and healthy wildlife populations and decrease damage caused by game to forest and other lands. S. Shvarc (Shvarc 1980) assumed that productivity of game population should be obtained through the optimal composition and structure of their populations that is the basis of game management. Wildlife management has to be compatible with the needs of wildlife considering the complex forestry, agriculture and environment protection interests.

Every two years since being set up in 1954 in Germany, the International Union of Game Biologists (IUGB) has brought together international wildlife biologists, forestry scientists, veterinarians, game managers, hunters and others interested in game or wildlife biology. The IUGB is an international non-profit organisation that encourages the exchange of scientific and practical knowledge and management of game and non-game animals and of their habitats improving the management of wild animals populations, and wildlife habitat conservation, and contributing to the comradeship amongst its Members. The main objectives of IUGB are to a) organize an international congress every two years; b) promote the concept of sustainable use of wildlife resources; c) stimulate research and international technical cooperation in the elaboration of new models of development and management of renewable resources, integrating the objectives of wildlife conservation, wise land use and economic decisions; d) promote awareness and appreciation of wildlife values; e) support and advance high standards of education and professional performance in the field of wildlife management; f) contribute to the solidarity amongst its Members; g) be committed to the protection of wild animals and the conservation of species; h) exchange information and encourage other forms of collaboration between this and other associations in allied scientific disciplines.

The 31st IUGB Congress was held in Brussels, Belgium on 28-30 August 2013 under the headline '*Diversity in Wildlife Management – Objectives and Tools'*. The Congress as the worldwide forum for game biologists had assembled 297 participants from 34 countries. The Congress based upon submitted contributions offered by registered participants and included opening and closing ceremonies, plenary and open sessions, workshops, poster sessions and exhibitions. The overall topic was addressed in 84 oral presentations including 6 Keynotes presentations, and 118 Posters given during 5 plenary, 17 parallel sessions. In addition, 7 thematic sessions and workshops were organized including "*Large Carnivores*", *"Harvest management of waterbirds*", *"Wildlife conservation and management: The role of traps and trapping"* , *"Managing wild boar in human-dominated landscapes", "The duty of care for animals: How relevant is the context of use?", "Large-scale animal ecology and management: Integrating large GPS-Telemetry-datasets across multiple animal popula-*

tions" and "*CAP 2020: a wildlife friendly policy? Opportunities at Member States level*". A number of issues stood out from presentations and related discussions and exchanges of views. The main issues of the Congress showed that as far as applied methodologies are concerned, the straightforward wildlife counting and monitoring may no longer be sufficient. Aims and objectives of the clear management to be set right from the beginning are required, with the emphasis not only on the game species concerned but also its habitat, the whole ecosystem and the wider environment. In the wildlife management and conservation programmes, the application of molecular biology techniques and genetic research is increasingly growing. At the Congress, more emphasis was put on human dimensions and the socio-economic aspects including interactions between human and wildlife and also between humans, with stakeholder involvement participatory management. The issues of *Invasive Alien Species* and their impact on wildlife management and on many other aspects of society as well as of wildlife welfare, from the points of view of management, research and sustainable use were emphasized.

The Congress Programme includes the one-day scientific excursions to 1) the Sonian Forest and its neighbouring ponds in the Brussels region, 2) the Hoge Kempen National Park in the Flanders region and 3) the Saint-Hubert Forest and Estate of Saint Michel-Freyr in the Walloon region. The Saint-Hubert forest (Ardenne) nearby the city of Saint-Hubert (capital of hunting) is one of the largest in Belgium. Most of the studies on large game species are conducted on the Hunts of the Crown (Hertogenwald and St Michel - Freyr) in Southern Belgium (Wallonia). Both sites were dedicated in 1982 to model game management, science, recreation, and education by King Baudouin. The Hunts of the Crown are now managed by the General Direction for Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment of the Walloon Region. These sites are subdivided into lower (240–350 m), middle (350– 500 m), and upper Ardenne (>500 m). The landscapes show an alternance between high deciduous forests, some coniferous stands and large open areas. This is also the centre of most of the scientific experiments on large mammals (red deer and wild boar) in Wallonia. Participants heard out the presentations on the activities and running research projects, observed devices for capturing large ungulates as the vertical nets and video-assisted tele-anesthesia (MICS) with simulations, and different kinds of exclosure experiments, currently tested as indicators of ecological change, visited the sites of the LIFE project for rehabilitation of peat and wet habitats.

Figure 1. IUGB Congress 2013 in Brussels: Plenary Session

Figure 2. IUGB Congress 2013 in Brussels: Parallel Session

The noteworthy event at the Closing session of the Congress was the launch of the *Jan Van Haaften Wildlife Management Award*, a new honour bestowed by IUGB for distinguished service to applied wildlife research in Europe. It commemorates Professor Jan L. Van Haaften (1928 – 2012) from the Netherlands, a longstanding IUGB supporter who advocated the wise use of wildlife resources and scientific research to improve understanding of wild species and their management. The Award, a superb bronze sculpture of a roebuck (Figure 4), created by Dutch wildlife artist Pieter Verstappen, was presented to Professor Harto Lindén (Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute) who has performed research on a wide range of species, from voles to large carnivores, and in particular on grouse. In Finland, he has developed the "wildlife triangle census" often described as the best game monitoring scheme in Europe. Professor Harto Lindén has been teaching in several Nordic countries, organised and chaired the 8th International Grouse Symposium (Rovaniemi, 1999) and was inter alia founding Editor-in-chief of the leading "*Wildlife Biology*" journal as well as President of the Finnish Ornithological Society.

The next IUGB Congress 2015 will be held in Puebla, Mexico, for which Professor Daniel Jimenez-Garcia took over the organisation's Presidency from Dr. Yves Lecocq at the Closing session of IUGB 2013.

Figure 3. The award was presented to Professor Harto Lindén

Figure 4. The next IUGB Congresswill be held in Puebla, Mexico

Figure 5. Congress participants in the field excursion in the the Saint-Hubert Forest and Estate of Saint Michel-Freyr in the Walloon region

Figure 6. Jan van Haaften Award

Historically and culturally, IUGB has focused primarily on Europe, but it became obvious that there are indeed many similarities between Europe and North America in the domain of wildlife management and research, and closer cooperation between IUGB and The Wildlife Society (TWS) can only be beneficial. It is likely that such cooperation will be developed in the near future and that at the next Congress in Mexico, participation from southern hemisphere countries will also be improved.

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