

## From the Chair

### The 4<sup>th</sup> International *Martes* Symposium demonstrates once more that MWG is unique

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In the past, I often claimed that the *Martes* Working Group was a unique professional organization made up of dedicated, leading wildlife scientists. The 4<sup>th</sup> International Symposium in Lisbon, Portugal, proved me right once again. While the facilities were more than adequate, the organization was impeccable. The symposium brought together scientists from 18 different countries. It also sponsored scientists who required travel assistance; this made us aware of research programs conducted in Lithuania, Hungary, Belarus, Russia, and a few other countries. The programme was diversified and addressed *Martes* taxonomy, distribution, ecology, species interactions, conservation, management, and research techniques. The oral presentations were all outstanding; posters were most informative. We all enjoyed exceptional food, outstanding entertainment, and a memorable field trip in the Sierra de Grândola. I tip my hat to Margarida Santos-Reis, Johnny Birks, John Messenger, and all the members of the Organizing Committee for providing our membership with a unique experience. They successfully met our objective to attract the attention of European wildlife researchers and managers. Many of us thought that the Symposium was one of the best scientific meetings we had ever been to. It was an electrifying experience and, not surprisingly, we soon had people offering to organize the next symposium. The 5<sup>th</sup> International *Martes* Symposium will be held in California, USA, in 2008.

We had a productive MWG membership meeting. First of all, we elected an Executive for the next four years:

- *Chair* / Gilbert Proulx (re-appointed)
- *Vice-Chair* / Johnny Birks
- *Treasurer-Secretary* / Erin O'Doherty (re-appointed)
- *Newsletter Editor* / Amie Mazzoni
- *Webmaster* / Jean-François Robitaille (re-appointed)

The election of Johnny Birks as Vice-Chair will allow us to maintain a stronger link with researchers from outside North America. Amie Mazzoni is our new Editor. She will replace Steve Buskirk, who did an outstanding job these last four years to keep us informed about *Martes* activities around the world. In order to eliminate publishing and mailing costs, the Executive decided that the Newsletter would now be digitalized and distributed through emails (with a few exception for those members without access to computers). The activities of the Executive will remain the same. However, Webmaster Robitaille indicated his intentions to render our website more interactive. Also, he

welcomes any suggestions that our members would like to make in order to improve our site.

After discussing our group's scientific and educational role, the membership mandated the Executive with the task to investigate the possibility of becoming a registered, non-profit society (motioned by Johnny Birks, seconded by Tom Kucera; unanimously accepted). It was felt that such a status could attract the attention of governments seeking professional opinions, and give greater exposure to MWG. It could also facilitate recruitment of funds from individuals and corporations to maintain our efforts to educate the scientific community and the public about *Martes*. We will explore our options, and we will report to our membership before making a final decision.

Twelve drawings were submitted for our logo contest by Roger and Consie Powell, Brian Long, my son Benjamin and myself. They were all very interesting drawings and I sincerely thank all the participants. A logo submitted by the Powell's won the favor of our membership and will now be used on our letterheads and newsletter.

As in the past, MWG will publish Proceedings from the Symposium. The Editorial Committee, consisting of Margarida Santos-Reis, Johnny Birks, Erin O'Doherty and myself, has initiated the peer-review of more than 20 papers. The release of the Proceedings is scheduled for summer 2005.

The Proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International *Martes* Symposium have now been published (D. J. Harrison, A. K. Fuller, and G. Proulx, editors – Springer Publ.). This new MWG contribution stresses the fact that efforts to successfully conserve and manage martens and fishers are associated with efforts to maintain structurally complex forests and manage sustainable harvest programs. Despite great strides in our understanding of *Martes* life histories, there are still many unknowns about their ecology and conservation. I hope that this new book, the symposium that we just experienced, and the upcoming proceedings will all be incentives for new researchers to join our unique group of dedicated professionals. We have a strong base; let's publicize our accomplishments and recruit active members who will contribute to the conservation of martens and fishers.