



From the Chair
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If we do not share our knowledge with others, we fail ourselves

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Have you ever asked yourself why you became a wildlife scientist? I guess that answers to this question must be as numerous as there are scientists in this world. It might be because you are curious about something and you just want to find an answer. Or your mission in life may be to save the world and find a solution to so many unanswered questions about biodiversity. You may want to be the one in a white laboratory coat who will decipher the “DNA of our ecosystems”. Or you may just want a good life wearing a plaid shirt, and loving the bush, the animals, beef jerky and beer. No matter what your reason to be a scientist is, if you do not communicate your knowledge to others, and if you do not bother to learn what others know, you are cheating yourself and failing to advance in your field of interest. Only by communicating with your peers will you be able to acquire state-of-the art knowledge, learn about new concepts and techniques, and avoid reinventing the wheel. If you are a *Martes* scientist, you must attend the 2009 Symposium that will be held in Seattle, Washington. Now is the time to plan your participation in an event that will allow you to exchange information, develop skills, and explore new ideas.

The 5th *Martes* Symposium will also be an opportunity for all of us to give new life to our working group. As usual, we need to re-assess ourselves and see how we can improve on our mission “to facilitate communication among people with a common interest in *Martes* research, conservation, and management programs”. Until now, our symposiums have resulted in the publication of peer-reviewed books that are highly regarded by practitioners, and the papers they contain are often cited in the scientific literature. Undoubtedly, our symposiums have facilitated communication among ourselves, and produced documents that have been and are still being used in conservation and management programs. But, can we do more to meet our objectives? For example, some other Species Groups produce their own bulletin (e.g., IUCN Otter Specialist Group Bulletin), refereed journal (e.g., *Ursus*, *Small Carnivore Conservation*), and documentation for the public (e.g., a teacher packet for schools provided by The National Bighorn Sheep Interpretation Center). Should we become more involved in the release of such publications? Of course, some of these organizations have a more comprehensive structure than

ours, and can afford to take on such projects. We are a small group and we must be realistic about what we can accomplish with a handful of volunteers.

This leads me to talk about our membership. We are an easy-going organization to say the least! Some of our members have failed to pay their dues in the past; others have paid, but they don't remember doing it. We need to tidy up our membership, and better follow the demographics of our group per country, interest, affiliation, etc. So, 2009 is going to be a new start for us. I ask that each and every member pays his/her dues by December 2008 – no exceptions. This will allow us to better plan our upcoming symposium (registration fees will be cheaper for those who have a *Martes* membership in good order), and see how we can improve on communications within our group. So, at the back of this Newsletter, you will find a membership form that you must complete and return to me with a cheque or money order for \$ 30.00 in Canadian or U.S. funds by the end of this year. Unfortunately, because of bureaucracy and bank shortcomings, we cannot accept other currencies. As you will notice, the membership form and payment must be sent to my office. Because of personal reasons, Erin O'Doherty is no longer able to fulfill her role as the Treasurer/Secretary. I will take over her functions for the next year.

At the symposium, we will discuss how we can increase our membership, and assure the future of our group. Should we reinstate the position of regional directors? Should we consider regional chapters (even though we are a small group)? How can we communicate our *Martes* knowledge to government agencies, forestry companies, pre-secondary schools, etc.? What can we do to better meet our objectives? You need to put on your thinking cap and come up with ideas. I expect good participation from all of you – after all, you have one year to think about it.