Conservation Breeding Specialist Group holds 3rd Strategic Futures Search Workshop, August 2000

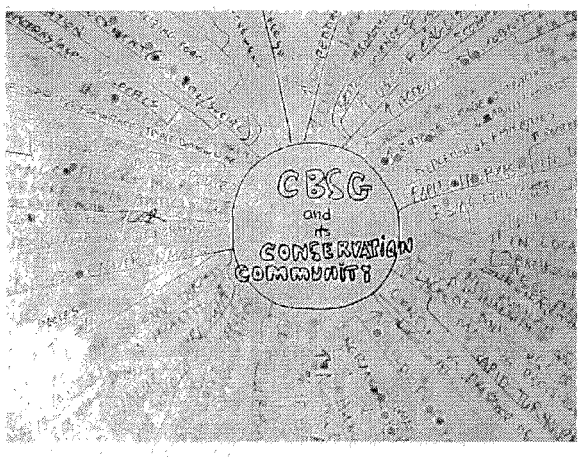
Executive Summary

Introduction

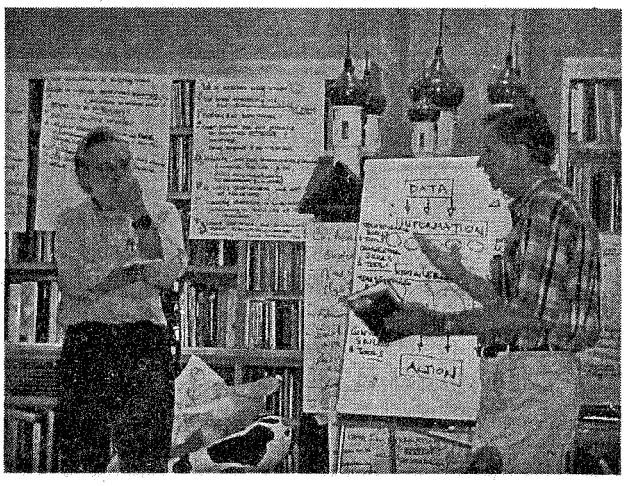
The Conservation Breeding Specialist Group's Future Search Conference held in White Oak in late August 2000, represented the third such exercise in ten years for this organization. As in 1993 and 1996, a sample of representatives from Future Search has proven the ideal strategic planning vehicle for non-hierarchical, networked organizations such as CBSG. CBSG's core and dedicated staff rely on an extended network of volunteer associates, members and regional convenors to initiate, develop and implement CBSG products and processes. One of the keys of CBSG's enormous effectiveness and resilience is the capacity of its network to work independently but in concert to achieve short and long term conservation objectives. Past CBSG searches have acted as an opportunity to convene some part of this network, giving individuals a chance to recharge their energy in interaction with colleagues, to find new sources of synergy, opportunities for collaboration and to stimulate thinking about new directions. This third search was no exception. Thirty members of CBSG from around the world worked together for three days on tasks designed to move from appreciation, to influence to controllable action plans.

Consultants Summary

In our (the consultants) opinion, CBSG is in a very different place than it was four years ago. With the growth and development of the staff potential, Susie Ellis, Onnie Byers and Phil Miller have built on CBSG's traditional catalytic and scientific capacity, in new and exciting directions, while Ulie Seal continues with undiminished energy and enthusiasm to generate new thinking and new opportunities for conservation action around the globe. The working group reports you will find included in this report reflect therefore both a shared commitment and distinctive, program related visions for the future. All the reports emerging from the workshop continue to share a common vision of CBSG as a catalytic engine for



Mind map -- one of the devices used in the Strategic Futures Process to enable participants to "map" the whole group mind, or thought process



Bill Conway of Wildlife Conservation International gives the Zoos Working Group Report closely attended by Ulie Seal, Chairman, CBSG.

conservation at a global level, as a source of innovation, profoundly committed to local and grass roots empowerment as well as to inclusion, and as a focus for cutting edge conservation science and processes. These commitments have remained constant over the last ten years. In addition, however, in these exciting new proposals for expanding possibilities in in situ conservation (Report 1), technology transfer and training (Report 2), community empowerment and expanded stakeholder inclusion through joint ventures with developmental NGOs (Report 3) and experimentation with new tools and tool sets such as GIS to stimulate interdisiplinary collaboration in the transformation of information to knowledge and knowledge to action. Once again, as in the past CBSG workshops, these proposals are linked to concrete action plans for which individuals at the organization have personally committed resources to ensure completion.

Zoos Working Group Summary

> ***Goal -- CBSG to develop further links between in situ and ex situ conservation activity.***

The Working Group identified the importance of Global Collection Planning (including intensively managed parks and reserves, as well as zoos, aquaria and botanical ardens), considered the need to franchise CBSG skill-sets (by promulgating CBSG's core workshop process more widely), and finally identified the need to find ways to help zoos meet the special needs of species doomed in nature (including a review of the draft IUCN guidelines on Captive Breeding). Note that "zoo" is used in the expanded sense in this group to mean "zoological parks, botanic gardens, and aquaria, including intensively managed parks".

Human Dimension Working Group Summary

Our involvement is a longer process, not just a snapshot, for involving local folks requires preparation, participation, support, and follow-through. Doing all this is not CBSG's

Lee Durrell of the Durrell Wildlife Preservation Trust presents her group's report

activity, and to accomplish this we must involve partners. It will be standard practice to operate the workshop as a joint venture, providing a partner with specific local knowledge that can follow-up on the workshop recommendations, including those that are relevant to local community participation in ongoing conservation actions. This is in contrast to the way most workshops are currently organized. One of the experiences that CBSG and the Human Dimensions Network has obtained over the past few years is that when an attempt is made to involve extensively non-biologist and non-government stakeholder in the past, it often is unsuccessful due to the workshop 'problem to be addressed' being identified almost exclusively as a scientific problem. This problem definition makes it difficult for others to become engaged. Involving a local NGO focused on those other stakeholders (local communities, indigenous groups, industrial firms) from the early planning stages allows the 'problem' to be more widely defined so as to engage all stakeholders. Initial experience suggests that this sort of partnership must be of longer duration prior to and following the workshop, and must be a true equal partnership addressing the needs of both CBSG and the local partner organization. The local NGO understands the needs of the non-traditional CBSG stakeholders better than CBSG staff will.

All relevant stakeholders are included. This may include local communities, industry / businesses that seek to extract local resources or produce local products; those individuals from outside that use the resources (outside hunters, fisherman, ecotourists). The local communities may include both traditional (indigenous) residents, and recent migrants.

In addition to local stakeholders, those social scientists whose knowledge and skill are most useful to provide insights, data, and analysis that is relevant to the analysis of risks to species or degradation of habitat will be included. This may include demographers, GIS specialists, geographers, transportation analysts, resource economists, etc.

The organizers of the workshop have the proper network in place in order to identify the appropriate participants (stakeholders / experts) before the workshop begins, and the means to ensure their invitation and participation in the process. Preparation activities will be carried out before the workshop (demographic analysis, preparation of GIS maps, analysis of patterns and projections of road building, analysis of patterns of resource extraction and use, both present and projected. Local residents that have traditional knowledge that may add to the scientific knowledge of the species will be identified and invited.

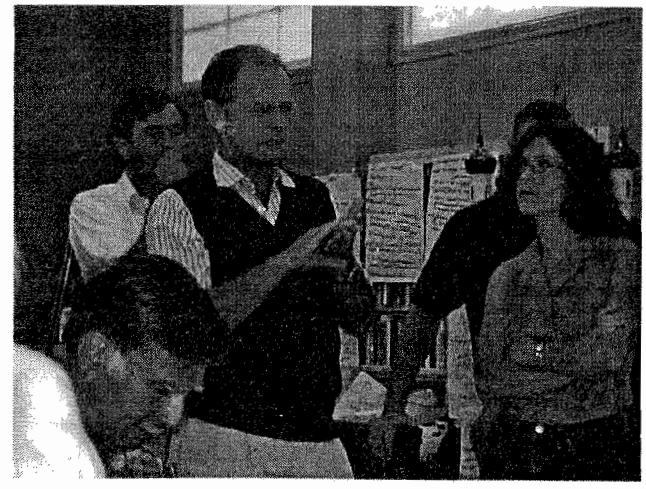
Catalyzing Capacity Building in Technology Transfer Working Group Summary

CBSG has a unique opportunity that has only been partially exploited – that is using its extensive network to build scientific capacity in areas of need. Its network includes experts with specialties in wide-ranging skills from biomedical science to landscape assessment. However, this network of experts is most often used for single workshop assessments, usually Conservation and Assessment Management Plans and Population and Habitat Viability Assessments. Although this one-off participation is useful for addressing immediate workshop concerns, these experts could be even more valuable if they were willing to help build capacity in range countries (i.e., empowering stakeholders in skills that have direct application to preserving biodiversity).

The biodiversity community is realizing that long-term conservation success will not be based on single species workshop convening only once. Rather, perhaps one of CBSG's most important legacies could be catalysis of training in-country people (who ultimately are the ones responsible for preserving their own biodiversity and natural resources).

There already is evidence that CBSG could be successful in this respect. To date, the CBSG secretariat has had some positive experiences with capacity building by conducting several facilitation training courses as well as biomedical training of colleagues in Asia working with tigers and giant pandas. Additionally, the CBSG regional offices have begun to have community impacts through local training in various wildlife disciplines.

As we evaluated trends both globally and within local CBSG activities, there was consensus at this Futures Workshop that CBSG could be much more influential and effective at



Mark Stanley Price, former Chair of the Reintroduction Specialist Group, discusses issues raised in his group with other participants

facilitating technology transfer. Most importantly, this major contribution could theoretically occur without a major cost (personnel or financial) to the organization itself. This can occur largely because of the network, especially the zoo network that already employs many potential trainers. Because zoos realize the value of contributing to capacity building, they are likely to both contribute their employees as well as financial support to fund training.

Therefore, this working group first brainstormed ideas about the potential role of CBSG in conservation training. This then was followed by the creation of a model that flowed from the CBSG Secretariat to the CBSG Regional Offices that, in turn, would identify a network of available and willing trainers that could represent and teach disciplines not currently being taught by other organizations.

All of this will be accomplished by:

1) creating a CBSG staff point person for training;

2) creating databases that will facilitate linking the required expertise with needs:
   a. training database on extant and needed courses;
   b. database of experts;
   c. a database of international conservation projects.

3. convening a Conservation Training Summit that will:
   a. provide new database information.
   b. identify new additions to the network.
   c. develop a long-term strategic plan.
   d. identify new methods for disseminating information, training and education (e.g., internet, video, etc.).
   e. work towards a strategic plan for new partnership development that would facilitate technology transfer.

Tools Working Group Summary

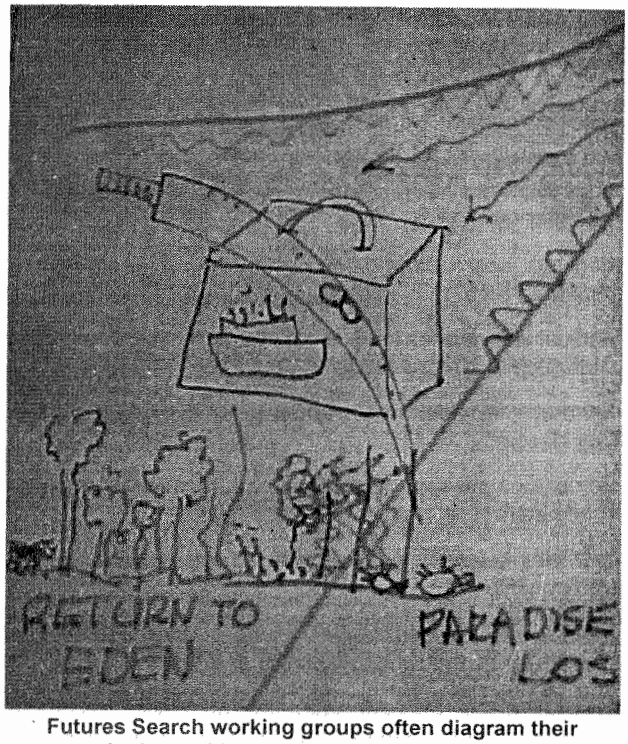
CBSG is committed to the development and application of new conservation tools that will slow and eventually reverse the accelerating loss of biodiversity. Accordingly, we identified a range of tools and ideas that could help mitigate adverse environmental trends. These potentially powerful new tools are predicated on the importation, enhancement, and integration of methods from multiple disciplines.

We developed a new operational structure that reflects CBSG's participatory and inclusive process and philosophy. The approach strives to transform data and information from disparate sectors and disciplines. These data are these harmonized and integrated for new collective knowledge. We believe application of this unique and potentially rich knowledge source will lead to conservation action.

We identified three primary areas of innovation or potential impact:

1. Means to identify and mitigate major current threats to species and systems. Included are risk assessment, system modeling, and genetic enrichment.
2. Spatial analytical models and visual presentations of information using new technologies for improved understanding of complex problems.
3. Development of new tools for transforming, connecting, and conveying data, information and knowledge.

A pilot workshop using carnivores in the Rocky Mountains was planned to test these new approaches as an enhancement of the CBSG toolbox. The scope and timeline were developed, and responsibilities were assigned.



Futures Search working groups often diagram their conclusions with a drawing. The meaning of this one is not hard to fathom.

CBSG South Asia -- Regional and National Networks

A Strategic Futures Search gathers its participants from the movers and shakers of the world that it represents, in this case, the Conservation Breeding Specialist Group, SSC, IUCN. It is a group brainstorming session to plan what CBSG will be doing for the next few years (normally about five). This "Search" was the 3rd such exercise in 8 years. In the other two instances, CBSG achieved its goals well ahead of the five years and soon scheduled another search.

CBSG, South Asia -- representing all the countries of South Asia -- will be following the lead of this Search as CBSG, India has attempted to do with the other Search exercises. CBSG South Asia will help country offices of CBSG (now in India, Nepal and Sri Lanka and soon to be in Pakistan) to organise workshops, find relevant literature and sponsors for workshops and provide guidance for new country offices. CBSG South Asia will organise an Annual Meeting in which three events will take place, a SAZARC meeting (South Asian Zoo Association), a South Asian CBSG meeting and a 3-5 day training in some important skill or discipline.

For a copy of the full Report of CBSG 2000 Strategic Futures Search, write or email CBSG, South Asia (zooreach @vsnl.com). Those interested in becoming a member of CBSG, India or South Asia or any other national network should fill the form enclosed in this issue including detailed biographical information as well as your activities, past, present and future hopes and dreams. In 2001 CBSG will reconstitute its international membership and the information in these forms will assist Chairman U. S. Seal decide on representation from South Asia.