

PREFACE

On October 20 to 23, 2005 the Italian National Park of Cilento and Vallo di Diano hosted the meeting *European Otter Workshop - Research Advances and Otter Conservation in Europe*. The meeting was focused on various research perspectives on the European otter *Lutra lutra*, and aimed to explore the prospects of joint national and international research and recovery programmes.

The meeting was sponsored by the National Park of Cilento and Vallo di Diano and was organised in collaboration with the University of Rome 'La Sapienza' and the University of Molise. It was dedicated to the memory of Claus Reuther, the late Chair of the IUCN SSC Otter Specialist Group who devoted much of his life to the protection of otters and their habitats.

The Scientific Program consisted in four sessions on relevant topics for otter research and conservation, each including talks by invited speakers and poster presentations. The session 'Distribution, GIS modelling, habitat suitability and restoration' was chaired by Luigi Boitani. Ettore Randi chaired the 'Genetics and conservation', while Jim Conroy and Claudio Prigioni run the 'Home range, population dynamics, and diet', and Michaela Bodner organized the session on 'Threats and conflicts'.

On October 23, a round table meeting, moderated by Anna Loy, focused on the status and conservation of otters in Italy. Discussion concentrated on topics and tasks needed for a national action plan for otters.

The European Otter Workshop was attended by 112 delegates from 19 European countries and Israel. A total of 41 posters were presented over the three days of the meeting. Contributions by Xavier Janssens, Aksel Bo Madsen, Claudio Prigioni, Paul Chanin, Jerzy Romanowsky, H. M. Anderson, Geoff Hobbs and their colleagues are now part of this volume, edited by the chairmen of the scientific sessions.

Jim Conroy, new chair of IUCN SSC Otter Specialist Group, Michaela Bodner, Continental OSG representative for Europe, Arno Gutleb, editor of the OSG Bulletin, and OSG representatives of many European countries attended the workshop, that also hosted a meeting of the European OSG.

As head of the Organizing Committee I personally would like to thank the staff of the National Park of Cilento and Vallo di Diano, and the helpers Salvatore Antonelli, Francesco Albergamo, Ilaria Campana, Marcello Cannetiello, Saviana Pansino, Lorenzo Quaglietta, Valentina Ruca, Lucia Schettino, for having greatly contributed to the successful organisation of the conference. My gratitude also goes to the chairmen of the scientific sessions who edited this volume and greatly contributed to the success of the meeting. A special thank to Claudio Prigioni who made possible the publication of these papers, that will likely contribute to improve researches and conservation efforts for the European otter.

Anna Loy