The brief story of the IBDC

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As a child I spent every summer in a village at my grandparents enjoying the great variety of domestic animals and wildlife including roe deer. I first decided to become a vet at about the age of ten. At university I pursued studies concerning wildlife. Then in 1972 I got a job at the new Game Biology Station nearby to Budapest. As a vet my main interest was primarily on parasites. Nevertheless my favorite animals were deer from the beginning: the native red deer and roe deer as well as fallow deer, what was introduced to Hungary around the 15th century. I started to collect as much information as possible, especially reproduction and general health status to understand the impact of parasites in deer species.

In 1982 I gained employment at the Agricultural College, Kaposvár, when I began to monitor and study red deer of Somogy county.

In connection with the research activity I tried to take every opportunity to learn and share ideas and experiences especially at conferences like the Congress of the International Union of Game Biologists (IUGB). I interacted with many scientists including just a few names: Anton and George Bubenik (Canada), Norma Chapman (GB), Hermann Ellenberg and Rudolf. R. Hofmann (Germany).

I think it is time to put my experiences on paper about my favorite world: the familiar atmosphere of the IBDC.

1. Capturing Somogy red deer for NZ

On a midsummer day 1983 one well known New Zealand (NZ) deer farmer Bernard Pinney visited Kaposvár, the center of the Somogy Forestry Company. The aim was to discuss the possibilities of capturing feral red deer (Cervus elaphus) for export to New Zealand. Somogy county red deer were chosen after evaluating the antler characteristics observed on international trophy shows: Somogy stags' antlers beside the good measurements (length and diameter of the beam) also showed just 3-4 (not too many) but long and thick branches in the coronet compared to those of other good quality populations in Hungary/Europe. (Note that the optimal time for cutting velvet antler for the traditional Chinese market is just before the branching of the coronet, which is ~60 days after shedding the old antler.) After discussions the decision was made: to capture live deer of both sexes undergo local quarantine and then transport to NZ via England. After two winters of successful captures about 120 were transported to the new home.

To illustrate the reputation of these deer in NZ, two stags born in Hungary were sold at auctions for record prices in the early 90-s: Kapos - $100,000 NZ, later Magyar (Hungarian) - $120,000 NZ.

2. Proceedings of the Deer Biology Conference NZ

In 1995 one of the New Zealand visitors gave me a brand new copy of the "Biology of Deer Production": The Proceedings of an International Conference held at Dunedin NZ 13-18 February 1983. This book served as a bible for our deer research group for many years.

3. IUGB Congress in Krakow, Poland 1987

In 1986 while perusing the 18th Congress of the International Union of Game Biologists (IUGB), I came upon the "Deer Farming" session held by Peter Fennessy (Invermay, NZ). This gave me an idea. Why not invite him to visit Kaposvár to discuss on our plan to hold a second congress on the "Biology of Deer" in the future. I have shared the idea with our university leader, Prof. Peter Horn, who agreed. Soon we sent a letter to Peter Fennessy. In the response he apologized for not being able to attend but Colin Mackintosh form Invermay, New Zealand would be attending. We met at the IUGB Congress in Krakow in 1987 and spent several days together at the post-congress tour to Popielno to see Prof. Z. Jacewski's famous deer research unit (antler physiology).During the 3 day tour I also spent a lot of time with Whitley Otway (NZ), a physician educated in traditional Korean medicine, as one of the founders of the NZ Deer Farmers Association. I spent an unforgettable time visiting him in 1988: seeing the wonderful Mesopotamian fallow deer and watching the intrauterine fertilization of red deer hinds with Père David's deer semen for the successful hybridization.
Some days later Colin arrived in Hungary. Visiting our campus and deer farm he accepted that our university would be a good host of the deer congress somewhat later.

4. Letter from Prof. Robert Brown
But our envisaged program would not be fulfilled immediately. Soon a letter arrived from Mississippi. Prof. Robert Brown wrote that had received a sponsorship offer: if they organize an international congress on the biology of deer they could get 30 thousand USD. He was interested in holding the second congress in Starkville (Mississippi, USA) instead of Kaposvár, if it suited everyone.

Our deer research team accepted the proposal, stressing our intention to organize the following conference in Kaposvár.

5. The newer congresses

2nd International Conference on the Biology of Deer, 28 May – 1 June, 1990, Starkville, MS, USA
Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee: Robert D. Brown

3rd International Conference on the Biology of Deer, 28 August – 2 September, 1994, Edinburgh, Scotland
Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee: John Milne
(Then in Edinburgh we were given the task to organize the next one in Hungary)

The new name of the congress
For the preparation of the congress, I was fortunate that e-mail had become the mean tool of communication by then making our task much easier and effective. We exchanged e-mails frequently, sometimes daily with Ken Drew (the chairman of the Scientific Steering Committee), discussing on the session topics, plenary speakers, and the most suitable schedule. It was not easy sometimes because the second World Deer Congress was also organized in the same summer (Limerick, Ireland; June 1998).

After a lot brain-storming I have put forward the idea to change the name of the congress to 4th International Deer Biology Congress. And Ken accepted it.

Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee: László Sugár

5th International Deer Biology Congress, 25-30 August, 2002. Quebec City, Canada
Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee: Michele Créte

6th International Deer Biology Congress, 7-11 August, 2006. Prague, Czech Republic
Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee: Ludek Bartos

7th International Deer Biology Congress, 1-6 August, 2010. Huilo-Huilo, Chile
Local Organizing Committee: Werner Flueck, Alexandra Petermann and Jo Anne Smith

And now Harbin is coming:

8th International Deer Biology Congress, July 27-31, 2014, Harbin, China
Chairman of the Local Organizing Committee: Zhi Xiaoliang

And why was China chosen as the next site?
The cradle of the deer is somewhere here too without doubt. Think of the existing unique antlerless forms: musk deer, Chinese water deer or others like muntjac and Père David's deer (milu). After the early differentiation, ancient deer started to disperse to west and east, north and south. Moving eastward they walked though the Bering land bridge to Alaska, other parts of North America, and slowly down-down to the Tierra del Fuego - Argentina, and Chile...

On the way they were followed by predators and parasites resulting in further differentiation due to co-adaptation, and co-evolution. And now we see the result: the colorful diversity.

Amazing...!

We all have to help preserve of this Deer World. The IDBC congresses help us a lot!