

WSCS Election for 2023-2027

The WSCS is pleased to announce the candidates for the Board of Directors (herein referred to as the Board) for 2023-2027. The biographies of the candidates may be found within this document.



The Board is comprised of 7 positions: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary General, and three Member at Large. There is one candidate for each of the following positions: President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary General. There are five candidates running for the three Member at Large positions. The biographies for the Member at Large positions are listed in alphabetical order.

A ballot will be sent to each WSCS member in good standing as of 1 December 2022. The ballots will be distributed to individual members on 8 December 2022 following the General Assembly of the WSCS. Each WSCS member will receive one ballot, and each member may place 7 votes (one for President, one for Vice President, one for Treasurer, one for Secretary General, and three for Member at Large). Voting will end 8 February 2023 and results will be disseminated within two weeks of the close of the election.

To ensure sufficient influence of the principal regions within the range of sturgeons (Europe, Russia, Middle East, China and Far East, and the Americas), the Board may invite representatives of those regions not represented on the elected Board as permanent guests to the Board.

Please read the candidate biographies. The candidates will also introduce themselves at the WSCS General Assembly on 8 December 2022.

Name: Paolo Bronzi
Affiliation: WSCS, Italy
Candidature Position: President



Biologist, he has been involved in aquaculture since the beginning of the seventies, with applied research on the controlled reproduction of euryhaline species (sea bream and sea bass). Responsible as lead researcher and manager at ENEL (National Electricity Board of Italy, then CESI) of the research and demonstration activities of the potential beneficial use of warm water discharged by power station, he oversaw also the construction of experimental aquaculture plants, including one of commercial dimension (La Casella), and experimented with the breeding in heated waters of numerous freshwater fish species (carp, eel, tilapia, catfishes, etc.) and marine (sea bass and sea bream). Managerial skills were further enhanced by participation in the General Management Program (58th Cycle) course offered at CEDEP (INSEAD) in Fontainebleau (France). He obtained also the qualification of "evaluator of quality management systems". Since 1988, with the achievement of the controlled reproduction of the Adriatic sturgeon (*Acipenser naccarii*), he has been particularly interested in sturgeons, studying their physiology and adaptation to the conditions of thermal and closed-cycle aquaculture. As responsible manager of ENEL, with other public and private entities, he has dealt with the wildlife recovery of this sturgeon species with breeding, release and monitoring by telemetry.

Now retired, he has been FAO consultant, member in EU commissions for the evaluation and planning of aquaculture projects, teacher in several aquaculture post graduate refreshing courses, responsible for the national statistics of aquaculture (2007-2014). He was a founding member (2003) of the WSCS (World Sturgeon Conservation Society), Board member (2003-2011), Vice President (2012-2019) and President (2019-2022). He's member of the IUCN – SSG. As President of WSCS, he has represented the society on numerous international occasions, with several presentations regarding the state of sturgeons, the statistics of global sturgeon and caviar productions, updated annually for almost 30 years, the progress of the faunal recovery of the Adriatic sturgeon, etc. He has always participated since 1997 in the organization of all the ISS (International Sturgeon Symposium), that the WSCS organizes every 4 years, now in its ninth edition (2023).

If reelected as President, Paolo will continue in the management of the society in its expansion, increasing external collaborations and in pursuing the objectives that the WSCS has set itself.

Paolo does not have travel limitations, and he does not have institutional support.

Name: Jörn Gessner, PhD

Affiliation: Leibniz-Institute for Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries, Germany

Candidature Position: Vice President



As a fisheries biologist I am coordinating the sturgeon remediation programs in Germany, while at the same time supporting the interaction between Baltic Sea range states through an Expert Group under the Helsinki Commission.

My research includes the development and assessment of reproduction and rearing technology, behavior studies in the lab and in the field, the determination of fishing gear alteration, as well as population assessments, fisheries management and restoration ecology in large rivers with a focus on sturgeons.

Being a foundation member of the WSCS, I am currently acting as Vice President for the WSCS while in close collaboration with the other Board Members we closely interact in all of the WSCS activities. Furthermore, I am also a foundation, and Board member of the German Society to Save the Sturgeon, the German Affiliate to the WSCS which was instrumental in bringing the sturgeon related issues on the agenda of conservation management in Germany and its neighboring countries while establishing stakeholder support for the activities underway. Having served as co-organizer for ISS8 and as SAC member for several of the ISS, I convinced that international collaboration and networking are essential to increase synergies and to improve the application of best practice. In order to increase the involvement of young scientists, we are beginning development of a student subunit within the WSCS.

If elected as Vice President, I intend to closely collaborate with the Board to increase the involvement of the active society members in the WSCS activities to render WSCS an umbrella and support structure through the establishment of regional subunits following the example of NASPS to expand local activities and visibility. This is also facilitated through the organization of the future ISS and to increased exchange through regional workshops. Close interlinkage with the President and the home office to share the workload will help to maintain the active involvement of the WSCS in conservation measures worldwide also through close collaboration with NGOs such as WSCS to facilitate their actions by supporting them with relevant information., help with.

I do have institutional support and travel permission to fulfill the appointed workload, although funding of travel through the institute is not sufficient to cover the incurring costs.

Name: Thomas Friedrich, PhD

Affiliation: University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, Institute of Hydrobiology and Aquatic Ecosystem Management, Austria

Candidature Position: Treasurer

In my position at BOKU, I am managing or involved in several projects on fish monitoring and restoration of sturgeon stocks in the Pontian Region, both on a national level, as well as internationally (LIFE-Sterlet, MEASURES, LIFE-Boat 4 Sturgeon). I also teach courses in fish taxonomy, fish ecology, monitoring of fish stocks and supervise bachelor and master thesis and engage in science communication and public dissemination.



I was a guest to the WSCS board from 2013-2018 and Treasurer of the Society in the last period starting 2018 and organized the International Symposium on Sturgeons 8 (ISS8) in 2017 jointly with IGB-Berlin. Aside from WSCS, I am a founding and executive committee member of the Danube Sturgeon Task Force (DSTF) and active in the IUCN Sturgeon Specialist Group. I was involved in the creation of the Pan-European Action Plan for Sturgeons as well as in the development of monitoring programs.

In the next term, I would like to focus on involvement of young people in the Society and the foundation of a student subunit. Likewise, I would advocate for more directive involvement of the membership through regional meetings focusing on technical or regional key issues.

Name: Molly Webb, PhD

Affiliation: USFWS, Bozeman Fish Technology Center, Montana, USA

Candidature Position: Secretary General



I am a conservation physiologist working for the United States Fish and Wildlife Service at the Bozeman Fish Technology Center in Montana, and I maintain an affiliate faculty appointment at Montana State University. My research interests include reproductive physiology, endocrinology, and physiological ecology of fishes, primarily sturgeons and paddlefish. My research has focused on development of non-invasive or less invasive methods to assign sex and stage of maturity and determine spawning readiness, the effects of the environment on reproductive potential and embryo and larval development, and the effects of stress on performance of fishes in the wild and in conservation propagation programs.

I am currently the Secretary General for the WSCS and the Treasurer of the North American Sturgeon and Paddlefish Society (NASPS; an affiliate of the WSCS). I am a founding member of the NASPS and was the NASPS Treasurer from 2012-2014 and 2020-2022 and the NASPS President from 2014-2018. With the current WSCS Governing Board members, we closely interact in all the WSCS activities. I have been involved in the development of a Student Mentor Collaboration Award between NASPS and the German Society to Save the Sturgeon, and we are beginning to develop a student subunit within the WSCS. I have been a member of the WSCS's Scientific Advisory Committee for ISS6, ISS7, and ISS8. I am currently assisting with finding a new home journal for the WSCS. With the current NASPS governing board members, we created a student subunit and a Student Mentor Collaboration Award; improved dissemination of information through our newsletters and website, and annual meetings (e.g., symposia, forum discussions, business meetings and listening sessions); and strengthened our ties to the WSCS.

If reelected as Secretary General, I will continue to assist the President, Vice President, Treasurer and the Governing Board in WSCS matters and logistics, facilitate communication with membership and outside organizations, conduct internal correspondence, and report activities at the annual meeting, as well as supervise elections. I will assist with the continued development of a student subunit within the WSCS, education opportunities through workshops at future ISSs, participate in planning for ISS9 and ISS10, and stimulate cross-talk among international universities, NGOs, agencies, and partners. I would like to assist with the WSCS website, as I currently manage the NASPS website, to increase communication and dissemination of information critical to the conservation and recovery of sturgeons and paddlefish and further development of aquaculture and caviar production worldwide.

I do have institutional support and travel permission to fulfill the appointed workload, although funding for travel through the institute is not sufficient to cover the incurring costs.

Name: Mikhail Chebanov, Prof. Dr. Sc. (Ichthyology)

Affiliation: State Regional Centre for Sturgeon Gene Pool Conservation “Kubanbioresursi”, Ministry of Natural Resources of the Krasnodar Region, Russia

Candidature Position: Member at Large



For 20 years, he has been a professor at the Department of "Aquatic Bioresources and Aquaculture" of the Kuban State University, since 2019 - Chairman of the State. Commissions for the defense of master's theses in these specialties. He has developed the technology of all-year-round reproduction of different sturgeon species and the selection and breeding programme and creation of the largest Ponto-Caspian sturgeon living gene bank; has developed and widely implemented: the method of ultrasound diagnostics for optimization of sturgeon broodstock management, a programme of poly-functional evaluation of fitness indices of different age-graded juveniles before their release to the wild, an optimal scheme of hatchery produced juveniles allocation in the natural water bodies. For many years, Prof. Chebanov has held a position of director of the South Branch Federal Center of Genetics and Selection for Aquaculture; was appointed to FAO UN as a consultant and convener of the ad hoc WP on Management of Sturgeon of the European Inland Fisheries Advisory Commission (EIFAC/FAO), a deputy chair (Eurasian sp.) and a member of the IUCN Sturgeon Specialist Group. Prof. Chebanov has provided constant methodical and expert assistance in breeding and rearing of 13 sturgeon species in a majority of Russian regions and in 16 countries, and for other international organizations.

Prof. Chebanov was a co-founder and has been a member of the board of directors (BD) of the WSCS being specially responsible for aquaculture industry relations and sturgeon population status in countries of former Soviet Union region. He is planning to perform the same functions along with other tasks on behalf of the BD. He chaired numerous workshops and conference sessions, including most of International Symposia on Sturgeon (1993–2017). He performed duties of a Chairman at Organizing Committee of International Sturgeon Meeting (ISM-2016) with 260 sturgeon specialists from 24 countries attendance. He is the author of more than 200 scientific papers, including 12 books.

Prof. Chebanov does have institutional support and travel permission to fulfill the appointed workload, although funding of travel through the institute is not sufficient to cover the incurring costs.

Name: Leonardo Congiu, PhD

Affiliation: Department of Biology, University of Padova, Italy

Candidature Position: Member at Large

I conduct research on different aspects of genetic diversity with a special interest on sturgeons. My research activity on this group of species has focused on different aspects such as population genetics, cytogenetics, development of molecular marker for sex and species identification, stock management, establishment of breeding plans for ex situ conservation, and genetic tagging. The above topics are studied through a variety molecular approaches ranging from the classic molecular biology techniques to high throughput technologies and resulting in over 40 papers on sturgeon conservation genetics, published on international peer reviewed journals.



I was elected as Board Member of the World Sturgeon Conservation Society in 2015. In recent years, I have co-coordinated for the IUCN Sturgeon Specialist Group the assessment of the 27 species of sturgeon and paddlefish released in July 2022. I am also one of the active promoters of the project idea for the establishment of a research and conservation center for sturgeons in Italy. I represented the WSCS as an invited speaker for many sturgeon symposia including but not limited to the Plenary Session at the International Sturgeon Meeting held in Krasnodar, Russia in 2016, the “Post release monitoring strategies in sturgeon restoration programs” workshop held in Bordeaux in 2018, the 9th International Sturgeon Conference in Warsaw, Poland in November 2018, and I was the co-chair of the “Sturgeon conservation and restoration session “ at the Europe Aquaculture Congress in Rimini, Italy in July 2022. I have been a member of the Scientific Committee, of different International Symposia on Sturgeons (ISS). I am currently a subject Editor for the Journal of Applied Ichthyology, reference Journal of the WSCS and the co-chair of the Working Group on Sturgeon Genetics.

During the past mandates as BM at Large, besides regularly participating in all ordinary activities of the society, my activity focused on the support to sturgeon conservation programs, promoting the adoption of solid scientific basis, and on the control of illegal trading. In this sense, besides sharing my technical skills to support the correct management of captive broodstocks of several species all around the world, I have also tried to highlight the importance of a scientifically supported approach in numerous conferences, meetings and working groups in which I was invited to speak on behalf of the WSCS.

In the case of election, my focus will be mainly aimed at establishing a bridge between scientific information and practical conservation of residual sturgeon populations, trying to fill the gap between knowledge and management. I think that one of the main obstacles for effective conservation of sturgeons is the lack of coordination between Decisional Authorities, Aquaculture Industry, Civil Society Organization and Scientific Institutions. I will do my best to promote and stimulate a synergic interaction among these actors which is, in my opinion, one of our main goals as international conservation society.

I do have institutional support and travel permission to fulfill the appointed workload, although funding of travel through the institute is not always sufficient to cover the incurring costs.

Name: James Crossman, PhD

Affiliation: Fisheries Ecologist, Rossland, British Columbia, Canada

Candidature Position: Member at Large

Thank you for considering me as a member at large for the Governing Board of the World Sturgeon Conservation Society. I have over 20 years of experience in the fisheries profession and have spent my entire career working on questions related to the recovery of sturgeon species. My research interests are in fundamental and applied questions related to understanding the ecology and life histories of threatened and endangered fish species. I'm passionate about advancing our understanding of biological processes in a framework that allows the science to be applied in decision making, ensuring environmental values and species conservation are prioritized in management decisions.

Results from my research directly informs the development of sustainable conservation aquaculture programs, fisheries management, and conservation biology. In addition to a diverse background in sturgeon management and science, I have direct experience implementing international recovery programs where legislative process and species listing statuses differ and committees are comprised with membership represented by multiple values.



I have been the President of the North American Sturgeon and Paddlefish Society 2019-2022 and the Vice President from 2014-2018. During this time, we have been very successful in building engagement and momentum for NASPS including reaching record membership levels, holding successful scientific meetings and workshops (including virtually during the pandemic), and contributing to WSCS initiatives through collaboration and support at ISS and General Assembly meetings.

As a Member at Large, I will promote WSCS as a platform to discuss research, management, and conservation/protection strategies, stressing the importance of collaborative and interdisciplinary research efforts. Along these lines I will work with the talented membership of WSCS to advance technical working groups established to advance research and monitoring programs or tackle specific issues facing multiple species as well as significant barriers specific populations may be facing. Further, ensuring that a WSCS membership facilitates professional growth, especially for students and young professionals, remains another important personal goal and I look forward to continuing to build momentum in student engagement in WSCS through student collaboration opportunities with WSCS members, development of new student subunits, and promoting student involvement at ISS meetings.

I do have institutional support and travel permission to fulfill the appointed workload, although funding of travel through the institute is not sufficient to cover the incurring costs.

I appreciate your consideration as a member at large for the World Sturgeon Conservation Society, and I look forward to contributing to this great society.

Name: Mohammad Pourkazemi, PhD

Affiliation: Affiliated member of Guilan University, Caspian Sea Water Basin Research Institute

Position: Member at Large



I did my PhD on Molecular population genetic on sturgeon in Swansea, Wales University, UK. in1996. My major research activity concentrated on Fish genetics and Biotechnology, Aquatic population genetics, molecular genetics, Aquaculture and restocking program & Fisheries management. I also as invited professor give lecture to M.Sc. student and PhD student in Aquaculture, Advance course on fish breeding and improvement /fish Genetics / Population genetics in Aquatic Organisms, Genetic breeding. I conducted more than 35 research Project on the Caspian Sturgeon and published more than 170 papers. In last 25 years I had long experience in working with FAO, CITES, IUCN and WSCS.

In WSCS, I have long join activity with WSCS as Foundation Member and Board member (2003), Vice president of World Sturgeon Conservation Society (2007- 2010), Member of Board (2010-2014) at present acting as WSCS Focal point in South Caspian Sea. In FAO: Chairman of Committee of Fisheries (COFI), 29th and 30th session, Rome- Italy.Member of COFI Advisory Working Group on Aquatic genetic resources, FAO. And also as Chairperson of COFI Advisory Working Group on Aquatic genetic resources FAO. Member of Scientific Committee of 4th International Symposium on Sturgeon, (USA), 5th (IRAN), 6th (CHINA), 7th (CANADA) 8th (AUSTRIA). Member of steering committee for FAO, Aquatic Genetic Resources, Thailand, January 2013. Representative of Asia in the CITES Animals Committee (from 2002- 2012). Chairman of IUCN/SSC/ Sturgeon Specialist Group for more than 14 years &. Co-chair (2012-2014).

My objective as a candidate for board member at large (mainly in Caspian Sea), are to share my long experience expertise with WSCS and would like to develop a 4 year road map how to increase the WSCS involvement both for sturgeon conservation in the wild (Action Plan) and sustainable aquaculture with considering current and future challenge on environment issues as well as climate change.

As a retired Professor, I have free time to spend much of it for the WSCS worldwide and no need for travel permission.

Name: Qiwei Wei, PhD

Affiliation: Center for Chinese Sturgeon Conservation Wuhan, Yangtze River (CCSC), China

Position: Member at Large

Since 1984, Dr. Wei Qiwei has been engaged in fisheries biology research at Yangtze River Fisheries Research Institute, Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences, and has carried out continuous and systematic researches on sturgeons, including *Acipenser schrenckii* and *Huso dauricus* in Amur River, and Chinese paddlefish (*Psephurus gladius*)(PG), *A.sinensis* (AS) and *A. dabryanus* (AD) in Yangtze River. Since 1980s, field ecological investigations of AS and PG were launched. It also took the lead



in conducting ultrasonic tracking of AS, carried out controlled reproduction and restocking research of AS, and led the research of commercial sturgeon aquaculture in China. He has published more than 200 research papers on sturgeon in international journals and 3 monographs such as *Conservation Biology of AS*. He led the drafting of *Action Plan for Saving AS (2015-2030)* and the *Action Plan for Saving AD (2018-2030)*, which were released and implemented by the Chinese government in 2015 and 2018, respectively. As the first accomplisher, he has won one second prize of China National Sci & Tech Progress Award and one second prize of Hubei Provincial Sci & Tech Progress Award.

He served as the Chief Scientist (Fishery Resources) of the Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences (2008-2021), the Vice Chairman of the Ichthyology Branch of the Chinese Zoological Society (2010 to present), the Vice Chairman of the Resource Environment Branch of the Chinese Fishery Society (2003 to present), and the Vice Chairman of the Sturgeon Committee of the National Aquatic Animal Protection Branch. Member of the IUCN Sturgeon Specialist Group (1996-present) and Director of World Sturgeon Conservation Society (2011-present). As the main organizer of ISS6 held in Wuhan, which was the most successful ISS with the largest number of participants so far. He was an active organizer of ISS7, ISS8, and the main organizer of ISS9. In 2022, he retired and founded Center for Chinese Sturgeon Conservation to contribute to the protection of Chinese sturgeon and the development of sturgeon aquaculture industry. If elected, he will coordinate with the work of the new president and the assignment of tasks of the new board of directors, especially the development of the Asian and Far Eastern Sturgeon members, and organize ISS9 and ISS10.

China is a hot spot for sturgeon conservation and commercial farming. I will make full use of this advantage and develop WSCS under the premise of good sturgeon protection and farming in China. For example, I will increase the number of WSCS members, especially institutional members, to enhance the vitality and influence of WSCS. To further strengthen the connection between China and Europe as well as North America sturgeon conservation and breeding development bridge and bond. Restart the sturgeon pilgrimage in Eurasia, etc

If elected, CCSC will fully support his work at WSCS, including participation in the WSCS Board of Directors for travel funding support.