

Name: Jörn Gessner, Ph.D.

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

Position: President



As a fisheries biologist, I have been involved in the sturgeon remediation programs in Germany and the range states of the North and Baltic seas for the last 30 years. My research includes reproduction and rearing technology, behaviour studies in the lab and in the field, fisheries techniques and population assessments as well as fisheries management in the frame of restoration ecology with a focus on the large rivers of the Northern German lowlands.

Being a foundation member of the WSCS, I am currently acting as Vice President for the WSCS. With the Board, we closely interact in all of the WSCS activities. Furthermore, I am a foundational member and a past 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 neighbouring countries. I am active in international conservation work through the membership in the IUCN Sturgeon Specialist Group as well as in the Helcom Expert Group on Sturgeon Recovery, which I have chaired for the last 7 years. My service as co-organizer for ISS8 and ISS10, as well as a SAC member for several of the ISS, I consider an expression of my belief in the benefits of international collaboration and networking. In order to increase the involvement of young scientists, together with NASPS, we initiated a Student Subunit to WSCS as well as bringing forward student travel funds to help increase international exchange between sturgeon researchers globally.

If elected as President, it is my intent to closely collaborate with the Board to increase the involvement of the active society members in the WSCS activities. This includes regional conferences as a missing link to the ISS. My vision of WSCS is that of a global umbrella helping to support local activities, such as the establishment of regional subunits to increase local activity and visibility and the networking between these regional nodes. To maintain the active involvement of the WSCS in conservation measures worldwide, I consider it inevitable to support and further the interaction with our partner institutions such as WWF and IUCN in an attempt to reach out to decision makers and the general public to increase the effectiveness of sturgeon conservation. To facilitate the exchange and synergies between research and management, the future ISSs will be of high importance despite the challenges for international exchange that have grown increasingly over the last 8 years.

Through my professional position, I do have institutional support and travel permission to fulfil the appointed workload.

Name: James Crossman, Ph.D.

Affiliation: Fisheries Ecologist, Rossland, British Columbia, Canada

Position: Vice President



Thank you for considering me for the position of Vice President of the Governing Board of the World Sturgeon Conservation Society (WSCS). I have 25 years of experience as a fisheries scientist and have spent my career working on the conservation and recovery of sturgeon species. My interests focus on advancing biological understanding in ways that can be effectively applied to decision-making, ensuring environmental values and species conservation are incorporated into management.

I bring a diverse background in sturgeon science, management, and recovery, including experience implementing international conservation programs where legislative frameworks, species listing statuses, and stakeholder values differ. My career has emphasized collaboration, bringing diverse perspectives together and translating scientific information into practical management actions. I also have extensive experience with sturgeon conservation societies and their governance. I served as Vice President, President, and Past President of the North American Sturgeon and Paddlefish Society (NASPS) from 2014–2024, helping build engagement within the Society and coordinate successful scientific meetings and workshops. As the North American regional representative on the WSCS Governing Board, I have developed a strong understanding of the Society's processes, relationships, and role within the international sturgeon community. I have also contributed to the planning and implementation of ISS8 and ISS10 through their scientific advisory committees.

As Vice President, I would help advance WSCS as an international platform for research, management, and conservation of sturgeons. I would promote regional collaboration and interdisciplinary approaches that connect research with the practical challenges facing sturgeon populations. As the current Co-Chair of the IUCN Sturgeon Specialist Group, I would also seek opportunities to strengthen connections between the two organizations and leverage their complementary expertise to advance sturgeon conservation. Supporting professional growth, particularly for students and early-career professionals, is also important to me. I would be pleased to bring this experience and my commitment to the Society and its members to the role of Vice President and help WSCS continue to grow as an effective international voice for sturgeon conservation. I appreciate your consideration.

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

Name: Thomas Friedrich, Ph.D.

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

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 guest to the WSCS board from 2013-2018 and Treasurer of the Society in the last two periods starting from 2018. I 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 Black Sea region.

During the last period, we started with student exchange grants, student presentation ties and further developed professional and personal collaborations in the field of sturgeon conservation. In the next term, I would like to further focus on involvement of young people in the Society and the formalization of a student subunit. Likewise, I would advocate for more direct involvement of the membership through regional meetings focusing on technical or regional key issues as well as closing ties with affiliated societies such as NASPS.

Due to the involvement in several large European funded sturgeon conservation projects, travel for WSCS is seen as integral part of the networking for the sturgeon issues and funds are available through projects.

Name: Molly Webb, Ph.D.

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 success and embryo and larval development, and the effects of stress on health of fishes in the wild and in conservation propagation programs.

I currently serve as the WSCS Secretary General and the North American Sturgeon and Paddlefish Society (NASPS; an affiliate of the WSCS) Treasurer. I am a founding member of the NASPS and was the NASPS Treasurer from 2012-2014 and 2020-2026 and the NASPS President from 2014-2018. I have been involved in the development of the Student Subunits within the NASPS and WSCS and assisted with the initiation of the WSCS Student Exchange grant. I have been a member of the WSCS's Scientific Advisory Committee for ISS6, ISS7, ISS8, and ISS10, and I am an active member of the IUCN Sturgeon Specialist Group. Being a member of the Governing Boards for both societies, I have helped strengthen the ties between the WSCS and NASPS.

If reelected as Secretary General, I will continue to assist the WSCS Governing Board to 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, educational opportunities through workshops, and planning for ISS11, as well as stimulate crosstalk among international universities, NGOs, agencies, and partners. I can assist with the WSCS website as needed, 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 worldwide. I would like to assist with finding a new home journal for the WSCS and establishing regional subunits to increase local sturgeon conservation and aquaculture activities and regional conferences. Increasing involvement is essential to the success of the society.

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

Name: Leonardo Congiu, Ph.D.

Affiliation: Department of Biology, University of Padova, Italy

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 of molecular approaches ranging from the classic molecular biology techniques to high throughput technologies resulting in over 50 papers on sturgeon conservation genetics published in international peer reviewed journals.
https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=it&user=kvjdynEAAAJ&view_op=list_works&sortby=pubdate

I acted as Board Member of the World Sturgeon Conservation Society for three mandates. 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 represented the WSCS as an invited speaker for many sturgeon international symposia and congresses, and I have been a member of the Scientific Committee of different International Symposia on Sturgeons (ISS). I was responsible for the Mediterranean area within the EC Service Contract Supporting Conservation and Protection Actions to Implement the Pan-European Sturgeon Action Plan. I am currently coordinating the LIFE RESTORE Project for the conservation of the Adriatic Sturgeon.

During the past mandates as Board Member 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. I will share my technical skills to support the correct management of captive broodstocks of several species all around the world.

In the case of election, my focus will be on strengthening the bridge between scientific knowledge and the practical conservation and management of remaining sturgeon populations, helping to fill the gap between knowledge and action. I believe that one of the main obstacles to effective sturgeon conservation is the lack of coordination among decision-making authorities, the aquaculture sector, civil society organizations, and scientific institutions. I will do my best to promote synergistic interactions among these actors, which I consider one of the key goals of an international conservation society such as the WSCS. In this context, I will make every possible effort to bring the international sturgeon community to Italy for the next edition. Particularly in light of the complex international situation, hosting the ISS in Italy would provide an open, inclusive and accessible meeting ground for scientists, conservation practitioners, authorities, stakeholders, and the aquaculture sector from around the world, fostering dialogue and cooperation across geographical and institutional boundaries.

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 all costs.

Name: Mohammad Pourkazemi, Ph.D.

Affiliation: Director of Iranian Fisheries Science Research Institute,
Retired, Tehran, Iran

Position: Member at Large



Dr. Pourkazemi finished his PhD at Swansea University, UK and has more than 35 years of experience in molecular population genetics in Aquaculture and Fisheries. For more than 16 years (1996-2012), he acted as Director of International Sturgeon Research Institute and established the first sturgeon gene bank in 2012 in Iran, then he moved to Tehran as Director of Iranian Fisheries Science Research Institute (2014-2019), with 12 affiliated Fisheries and Aquaculture research centers and also supervised several regional and international projects on conservation of shared stocks of sturgeon genetic resources. He conducted several applied genetic research projects on sturgeons, cyprinids, trout, Artemia and shrimp regarding various branches of genetics including population genetics, hybridization, and chromosome set manipulation (gynogenesis), triploid selection, cryopreservation, gene cloning and expression.

He was one of the foundation members of World Sturgeon Conservation Society (WSCS) in 2003 and later acted as a Board Member (2003-2014) and Vice President (2007-2010). He was a representative of Asia to CITES (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora) Animals Committee (2002- 2013), and he has been the Chairman and Co-chair of IUCN Sturgeon Specialist Group (from 1999-2012 and 2012-2016, respectively). He also was the chairman of Committee of Fisheries (COFI) 29th and 30th sessions in Rome, Italy. As chairperson in 2005, he hosted and organized the fifth International Symposium on Sturgeon (ISS) in Ramsar, Iran. He also was a member of scientific committee in International Symposium on Sturgeons ISS4 (USA), ISS5 (Iran), ISS6 (China), ISS7 (Canada), ISS8 (Austria) and ISS10 (China). Dr. Pourkazemi still gives lectures part time in several national universities for doctoral and masters students on genetic breeding of fishes, population genetics, aquatic molecular genetics, and biotechnology in fisheries. He has published more than 100 ISI and scientific papers in various fields of fish genetic, aquaculture, fisheries, conservation and rehabilitation program. Since 2016, he has been acting as a member of FAO- COFI Advisory Working Group on Aquatic Genetic Resources.

Name: Wei Qiwei, Ph.D.

Affiliation: Director of Center for Chinese Sturgeon Conservation (CCSC), Wuhan, China

Position: Member at Large



I received my B.Sc. in Biology from Jiangxi University (now Nanchang University) in 1984 and my Ph.D. in Hydrobiology from the Institute of Hydrobiology, Chinese Academy of Sciences in 2004. I spent most of my career at the Yangtze River Fisheries Research Institute, CAFS, and retired in 2022. Since then, I have been invited to serve as Director of the Center for Chinese Sturgeon Conservation (CCSC), where I continue my lifelong dedication to sturgeon conservation and sustainable use. My research covers the conservation biology of endangered sturgeons, mainly on *A.sinensis*, *A.dabryanus*, *A.schrenckii*, *H.auratus* and paddlefishes *P.gladius* in China—as well as sturgeon aquaculture, trade, and stock restoration. I have published over 400 peer-reviewed papers included in some top journals such as Nature Ecology & Evolution, Cell, and Molecular Biology and Evolution, and have authored ten books.

I have been a member of the IUCN/SSC Sturgeon Specialist Group since 1996 and have served continuously as a WSCS Board Member at Large since 2011. I represented China in organizing the 6th International Symposium on Sturgeons, delivering keynote presentations at numerous international conferences. Domestically, I serve as Deputy Director of the Ichthyology Branch of the Zoological Society of China, Deputy Director of the Fisheries Resources and Environment Branch of the China Society of Fisheries, and a member of the National Nature Reserve Review Committee. I am also on the Editorial Boards of Current Zoology and Journal of Applied Ichthyology. As Director of CCSC, I lead teams on in-situ and ex-situ conservation of Chinese sturgeon, with extensive experience in team management and large-scale project coordination.

If re-elected, I aim to further strengthen the bridge between China/the Far East and the global sturgeon conservation community, with a special focus on advancing WSCS's work on sustainable use of sturgeons. I will: (1) actively share China's successful experiences in sturgeon aquaculture, stock enhancement, and trade regulation, and assist WSCS in developing science-based and pragmatic guidelines for sustainable use; (2) promote collaborative research between WSCS and Chinese institutions to explore win-win pathways for conservation and development; (3) support WSCS student activities and capacity-building for early-career researchers; and (4) contribute to routine Society operations (website, newsletters, etc.) to enhance WSCS's visibility and influence in Asia.

The Center for Chinese Sturgeon Conservation (CCSC) has committed to fully covering all travel expenses (both international and domestic) related to my WSCS duties and will provide ample working time to ensure my full commitment as a Board member.

Name: Eric Rochard, Ph.D.

Affiliation: INRAE (French National Research Institute for Agriculture, Food and Environment) Research Director in Aquatic Ecosystems and Global Changes research unit, Estuarine Ecosystems and Diadromous Fish Conservation research team, Bordeaux, France

Position: Member at Large



My research focuses on diadromous fish ecology and conservation across multiple spatial scales. I coordinate research supporting the French National Action Plan for the conservation of the European sturgeon *A. sturio* and organise regular meetings with partner laboratories across Europe to strengthen scientific cooperation. My current research investigates the combined effects of climate change and pollution on sturgeon embryos. I also supervise Masters and Ph.D. students and teach courses on fish conservation and biodiversity in the master's programme at the University of Bordeaux.

<https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Eric-Rochard>

<https://cv.hal.science/eric-rochard>

I have participated in nearly every International Symposium on Sturgeons since the inaugural “Acipenser” in Bordeaux and have delivered numerous presentations on sturgeon conservation across Europe. In recent years, I have contributed to several international meetings and workshops on sturgeon science and conservation including the Bern Convention, Pan European AP Focal points meeting (Strasbourg, France) October 2022, the UK Sturgeon Alliance workshop (London, UK) October 2022, the 10th International Symposium on Sturgeons (Yichang, China) October 2025, the Mini Symposium on Macroregional Sturgeon Project (Vienna, Austria) April 2026 and the EU Macro-regional and Sea basin Strategies days (Brussels, Belgium) July 2026. In September 2024, I also organised a “Sturgeon week” in Bordeaux bringing together researchers and stakeholders through a series of scientific and outreach events. I actively contribute to several scientific and advisory committees including the IUCN “Sturgeon Specialists Group”, the Adour-Garonne basin Scientific Committee, the Life project «Migratoebre» (Spain) Scientific Committee, the Scientific Committee of French National Action plan for the European sturgeon and the management committee of the Research Network on Anticipating Climate Change in Territories in Transition.

As a board member, I would be pleased to contribute to the organisation of seminars and workshops, the drafting of summary reports, and the proofreading and evaluation of scientific and technical documents.

I have the support of the head of my unit for travel, and I should be able to secure at least partial institutional funding for these activities.