

The Muqu Snow Leopard Conservation Project

Successful trial of collaborative management in the SNNR

The people of Muqu village (in Suojia, Zhiduo) have been monitoring wildlife, especially snow leopard, since the late 1990s. Following the establishment of Sanjiangyuan National Nature Reserve, they also have collaborated effectively with conservation authorities to protect wildlife by serving as park wardens. Their duties have included monitoring local wildlife populations, anti-poaching patrols and raising environmental awareness. Snow leopard conservation research has been carried out by herders through regular surveys and with automatic camera-traps.



Collaborative management of the wild yak and Tibetan wild ass is also underway in the region

PARTNERSHIP

Mutual respect, communication and trust are the necessary foundations for development of genuine, long-lasting partnerships.

Sustainable development is built on such partnerships, and it encompasses not only the economy but also the environment, society and culture.



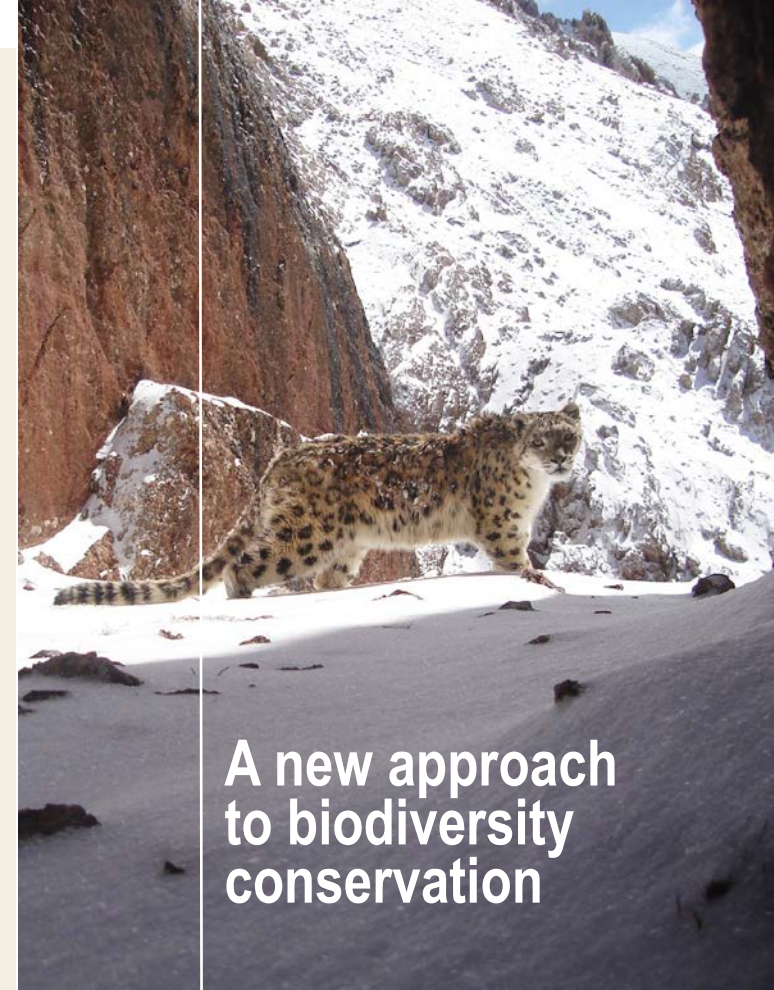
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A new approach to biodiversity conservation

Community co-management in Tibetan grasslands



Working together for conservation and sustainable development:

- Muqu pastoralist community
- Sanjiangyuan Nature Reserve
- Plateau Perspectives Canada



Protecting Nature and Livelihoods, Supporting Our Common Future

Local livelihoods such as sustainable pastoralism are crucial for the long-term maintenance of the grassland ecosystems of the Tibetan plateau.

Healthy habitats (grasslands) are important for people's economic and physical well-being.

Wildlife species are an integral part of grassland and mountain ecosystems and must be protected.

The Alpine Grasslands and Mountains, Our Home

Herding communities have lived for centuries in the grasslands of the Tibetan plateau, such as the headwaters of the Yangtze River. A unique culture has developed in this context, and pastoralism as a 'way of life' can be sustainable. Now local herders are working together with nature reserve managers to protect their home's native wildlife.

Co-management >>>

In the 'Suojia Co-management & Biodiversity Protection Project' (*Yicun Yidian*) that began in 2008 two complementary approaches to monitoring snow leopard and other species were employed in Muqu village: (1) people with good knowledge about wildlife (e.g., former hunters) offered to serve as wildlife monitors (park wardens), undertaking transect surveys four times a year, noting both direct animal sightings and signs; and (2) automatic camera-traps were placed in same areas to allow individual identification.

This dual approach to monitoring wildlife was chosen to help determine the most cost-effective way of carrying out conservation (and supporting research) in the project area.

Outcomes >>>

Based on monitoring efforts from 2008 to 2010, it is clear that the methods are complementary and both should be continued. In the above period, 22 snow leopards sightings were documented by herders; and from photo analysis it was found that 7-9 individual leopards are present in ~150 km²,

based on analysis of 21 different photographic events and over 100 photographs. In addition, the following species also were

documented by the local herders (co-managers): Tibetan wild ass, antelope, wild yak, blue sheep, argali, Tibetan gazelle, white-lipped deer, wolf, Tibetan fox, red fox, lynx, Pallas' cat, brown bear, hare; and black-necked crane, bar-headed goose, ruddy shelduck, brown-headed gull, and Pallas' gull.

Lessons learned >>>

Working with local herders (local communities) can bring benefit to conservation authorities and to local people alike. The two methods complement each other - both should be continued. Yet at the same time, more training will help to ensure that wildlife data is gathered by local monitors more systematically. Additional field equipment for local monitors and field station managers also is recommended.



Collaborative Management in Qinghai's Sanjiangyuan Region >>>

For over a decade, local Tibetan communities have been aware of the importance to protect natural resources – and they have integrated their concern for the environment and their desire for socio-economic development by partnering with conservation authorities and adopting a new approach to protected area management, namely Collaborative Management. Various forms of co-management have been trialed to date, and with some further development this approach could become mainstream and applied more widely. Such partnerships can be the most effective way to protect regional biodiversity at the same time as promoting greater equity and creating new socio-economic opportunities for local communities.

