

## Second Annual Report Abridged of the Biodiversity Working Group (BWG) of the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED)

JOHN MACKINNON      WANG SUNG

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### 1 BACKGROUND

This working group was formed at the end of 1992 under the joint chairmanship of Prof. Wang Sung of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and Dr. John MacKinnon, Director of the Asian Bureau for Conservation. Membership of the group is composed of an additional 4 international experts and 4 national experts.

The terms of reference of the working group as approved by CCICED are stated as:

- a) to bring together the relevant government agencies and scientific institutions in China, and appropriate governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with the conservation and sustainable use of living resources and biological diversity;
- b) to analyse and review information of China's biological diversity, including information on its use, and to propose survey and research to remedy deficiencies in this knowledge base;
- c) to propose strategies and actions for the conservation and sustainable use of the nation's biological diversity and living natural resources.

During the First (part) year of operation the working group undertook a very broad overview of the entire state of biodiversity in China. The group reported to the 2nd meeting of the CCICED council that biodiversity was enormously important to the welfare of China, in the order of \$100 billion in services per annum, but that these massive benefits were dangerously threatened as a result of human pressures, wasteful practices and lack of controls. Five major recommendations were put forward:

- ①Lead the World in implementing the Convention on Biological Diversity.
- ②Establish a National Biodiversity Authority.
- ③Launch Nation-wide Public Awareness Campaign.
- ④Establish National Biodiversity Information Service.
- ⑤Increase Resources devoted to Biodiversity Conservation.

As a detailed review of *in-situ* conservation in China had been recently completed by WWF it was decided that the priority for the BWG in its second year should be to investigate the state of wildlife utilisation in China, the state of *ex-situ* conservation in China and to start to develop a better database and data management system so that the country could start to monitor its biodiversity resources and

their utilisation. In addition at the special request of State Councillor Song Jian the group tried to organise an international workshop on the issue of controlling wildlife trade in East Asia.

## 2 Activities of the BWG in the second year 1993~1994

### 2.1 Meetings

A total of four meetings of BWG were held during the year. The second meeting of BWG was held at the Xilihu Wildlife Safari Park in Shenzhen, 14~15th August, 1993. The following items were dealt with:

East Asia Trade Protocol Initiative; Bera farming issue; Work plan of the group and preparation of contracts for commissioned studies; Inspection of the safari park as a zoo and breeding centre.

The third meeting of BWG was held in Haikou, Hainan from 2~9 Dec. 1993. Topics covered during the meeting were:

Update on studies; Update on Trade Workshop; Development of Biodiversity Metadatabase project; Evaluation of *in-suit* conservation on Hainan.

A field outing was arranged to several of the islands's nature reserves and a report on the effectiveness of the protected area system was prepared and submitted to local authorities. Hainan was selected as a case study site because it is a tropical biodiversity rich region which has already faced very extensive loss of forest habitat and is now facing the most rapid economic development in the country.

The fourth meeting of BWG was held in Buenos Aires at the time of the IUCN General Assembly, 23 January 1994. The following topics were dealt with:

Explanation of the activities and role of BWG; Update on active studies; Future role of the BWG and possibilities of expanding its membership; Securing of long-term funds for the activities and projects of the group; E. Asia Wildlife Trade Control.

The consensus of the meeting was that the group did serve a unique and valuable function and that it was needed for some long-term studies; that the group would benefit from an expanded membership and there were many offers to join the group and that the group would need to secure additional funding to that possible through CCICED. Several possible sources for funding were discussed. The group offered to act as an international window for IUCN and other conservation agencies to find suitable partners for collaborative work in China.

The fifth meeting of BWG was held in Mudanjiang, Heilongjiang Province from 15~23 August 1994. The following topics were dealt with:

Report on commissioned studies; Update on East Asia Trade Initiative Meeting; Bear farming (including visit to farm); Captive breeding; Examination of some local nature reserves; Formulation of 1994-1995 workplan; Drafting of 1993~1994 Annual Report of BWG.

### 2.2 Studies undertaken by BWG (1993~1994)

Grants from CCICED as well as partially from the Ford Foundation were allocated to cover the operation of 4 studies as follows:

**2.2.1** Michael Lau of Hong Kong University was commissioned to coordinate a study of wildlife trade in S. China focusing on wildlife markets in Macao, Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guanzhou.

2. 2. 2 A second study is being undertaken by Prof. Li Dianmo of the Institute of Zoology, CAS to prepare an analysis of Wildlife Trade in China. Due to the enormous size of China it was decided to focus the study on one case province. Guangxi was selected for study because it is a biodiversity rich region with a strong tradition of wildlife utilisation for both food and medicines and was bordering a typical SE Asian neighbour, Vietnam, with whom a considerable border trade in wildlife exists.

2. 2. 3 A contract was offered to Prof. Xu Zaifu, Director of the Menglun Botanical Garden in Xishuangbanna and Chairman of the China Botanical Gardens Association to complete a report and draft guidelines for a strategy on *ex-situ* conservation of plant resources and the role of botanic gardens in China. The study is completed and is awaited eagerly by the chairmen.

2. 2. 4 A contract was awarded to Prof. Wang Zongyi of the Beijing Milu Ecology Centre to complete a similar report on *ex-situ* conservation of animals in China and the condition of Chinese zoos and breeding centres. This study involves the use of questionnaires to get information on the conditions of zoos, their collections, acquisitions, breeding success and other details. The study also involves inspection of a sample of zoos and breeding farms.

### 3 Other activities of the BWG

#### 3.1 Bear farming

The issue of bear farming in China has aroused considerable international media attention and drawn adverse comment from animal rights groups. Councillor Song Jian has taken a personal interest in the issue and the BWG felt it appropriate to look into the situation and give some advice and comments.

Briefly, China needs bear gall for the production of 80 types of traditional medicine. However, at the beginning, the taking of wild bears for trade and rearing was out of control and caused loss of thousands of bears from the wild. From 1984 China started to set up bear farms using methods learned from DPR of Korea to obtain galls from live bears. It was reported that one farmed bear can produce the same amount of gall every year as killing 60 bears. (i. e. in an average 5 year production life a farmed bear spares the killing of 600 wild bears). It was also reported that a total of 49 farms have been registered for the production of gall powder. In addition to the registered operations there are numerous small, privately owned facilities holding bears which are not licensed or controlled by government. It has been estimated that a total of 10 000 bears are currently held in captivity throughout China.

Since 1986 black bear has been protected in China. Killing of bears and capture for farms are now under the control of the Wildlife Protection Law, commercial export of all bear parts is prohibited under CITES. The bear population in the wild appears to be recovering in recent years partly due to banning the export of bile powder but hard data to demonstrate this are still lacking. Funds have been assigned by MOF for two scientists to lead a full investigation on this point.

The international issue is not so much a question of conservation effectiveness or pragmatism as a moral issue of cruelty and animal rights. Many bears are confined in tiny cages and kept in poor conditions. MOF is therefore issuing new regulations and standards that must be met otherwise farms

will be closed down. Methods have now been developed for painless collection of gall and these will be obligatory. Efforts are being made to develop a synthetic production line for bear gall which will eliminate the need for farms. Medicinal equivalents or alternatives will also be sought.

**Recommendations:** The Working Group recommended that:

a) a national inventory of all facilities (registered and unregistered) currently holding bears in China be undertaken, and that the standard of management and husbandry practised for the captive maintenance of bears and the production of gall be evaluated; and b) the Working Group be responsible for reviewing the results of the national survey and evaluation in order to recommend to Council any necessary corrective action.

### 3.2 Development of biodiversity metadatabase for China

This was agreed in the annual meeting of the working group as a high priority issue. Dr. Donald Gordon of WCMC visited China in September to develop the details of this project with Prof. Li Dianmo. A project proposal for \$120 000 for this work was duly prepared and submitted to the Darwin Initiative. Unfortunately the proposal was turned down. The BWG still believe that this is a priority project and it corresponds precisely with project 9 as identified in the recently launched Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan for China prepared under the GEF, a project of the World Bank. The project is being expanded to cover the initial development of a metadatabase and then to progress into a second phase of developing a coordinated network of databases across the country to monitor distribution and abundance of native species, particularly those being utilised and also monitoring levels of use in markets, shops, restaurants, medical factories etc. The revised document will be submitted to ODA (British bilateral aid).

### 3.3 East Asian wildlife trade control initiative

At the CCICED Meeting in Hangzhou (May 1993), CCICED Chairman Song Jian requested the BWG to formulate a proposal for a meeting to consider issues and policies concerning the East Asian wildlife trade, with particular attention to China's role. Accordingly, BWG Co-Chair John MacKinnon, with the assistance of Council member Dr. Martin Holdgate, prepared a draft proposal immediately following the CCICED Meeting. Since that time, the following steps have been taken:

- Members of the BWG and other colleagues have met several times to move forward on this proposal. Some amendments of the draft proposal were also made during the course of these consultations.

- An organizational structure was established to facilitate preparation for the meeting, per the instructions of CCICED Chair Song Jian. This includes an Organizing Group, headed by the Ministry of Forestry, with members from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Public Security, Agriculture, and Public Health and NEPA, the State Administrative Agency for Traditional Medicines, the General Customs Office, and the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS). A secretariat for the meeting, composed of staff from the Management Authority for CITES and the Bureau of Foreign Affairs (both within the Ministry of Forestry) was established to assist the Organizing Group. The Organizing Group also suggested — contingent on obtaining funding — the creation of an Experts Group based on the BWG and adding additional experts — particularly in the field of law — to prepare the documentation for the meeting. These three bodies are thus working to organize and

coordinate the meeting, and elaborate the technical issues to be addressed.

— Financial support for the meeting was sought, focusing initially on UNDP. Initial contact with UNDP's Beijing office was made by BWG Co-Chair John MacKinnon. Then CCICED Member Maocheng Shen, Executive Vice-Minister of Forestry, sent a letter to UNDP, officially requesting financial support for the meeting. UNDP has not yet been able to make the required funds available.

— Advice and support from the international community was also sought and obtained, mainly through participation at the Animals Committee and Standing Committee of CITES meeting in Brussels (September 1993), and at the IUCN General Assembly (Buenos Aires, January 1994). The two CITES Committees discussed the proposed meeting, and both expressed their appreciation and full support. In addition, IUCN, TRAFFIC and other conservation NGOs have expressed their support and willingness to participate.

A proposal was also discussed to expand the scope of BWG-sponsored work on the wildlife trade in the following manner:

— Work would move ahead to hold the planned meeting, initially involving technical experts, focusing on the trade between China and the countries of Southeast Asia. This meeting would be held in Guangxi in the first half of 1995, funding permitting.

— At the same time, work would be initiated to plan similar meetings focusing on the Russian/Chinese border trade, and on China's south-western Asian borders. Quantitative studies of the trade in these areas would also be initiated, to provide hard data for these meetings to consider.

— Following these three meetings of technical experts, a meeting at the policy-maker level would be held to consider the outcomes and findings of the three sub-regional meetings, and foster discussion and action on both national and cooperative international policy development and action.

#### *4 Particular observations and recommendations of the working group*

##### *4.1 Wildlife trade controls*

Over the past year, the BWG directed considerable attention to the issue of trade in wildlife, and its impacts on biodiversity in China and neighbouring countries. Two preliminary studies were commissioned, one of them completed, the other well underway. From the results of these studies, and from secondary sources reviewed, the Working Group concluded that the high current level of wildlife trade — particularly across international borders — is a serious threat to the biodiversity of both China and neighbouring countries. The BWG therefore concluded that: a) further quantitative studies should be carried out; b) steps to develop stronger domestic policies should be taken; c) the capacity of relevant government authorities to control transborder trade in wildlife and domestic use of wildlife should be increased substantially and improved through effective training programs; and d) regional/bilateral trade protocols should be developed.

The foregoing activities should be taken concurrently, since the threats posed by unregulated and unsustainable trade are critical. The main conclusions of the study of trade across Guangxi/Vietnam border are as follow:

— With the opening of the border several years ago, growing prosperity in Southern China, the

lack of other sources of income and lack of controls on hunting and collecting in Vietnam, this trade has exploded in the past few years. Without controls rapidly put into place, many species in the border area are likely to disappear in the near future.

- The wildlife trade across the Vietnam/Guangxi border is unmonitored and unregulated by either the Chinese or the Vietnamese authorities. Species and volume records are not kept.

- The unrestricted flow of Vietnamese wildlife has the potential to introduce exotic and possibly invasive species into Chinese habitats, with a negative impact on native species.

- The trade involves many species — some protected. 91 species are involved in the trade (domestic and cross-border) in this particular area, 35 of which are under state special protection in China. 55 are involved in the live animal trade (sold live in markets). 39 species are used in food and drink. Of the 91 species, 38 are found in the cross-border trade.

- The volume of animals traded is very great for some species. For example, an estimated twelve tons of tortoises were taken across the border in just one day at one customs post. At the same port on the same day, 13 containers of Pangolin (containing 76 individuals weighing a total of 234 kg.) and 10 containers of Monitor lizards (150~200 individuals, weighing a total of almost one ton) were taken across the border into Guangxi.

The results of this study are confirmed by the preliminary findings of a second study commissioned by the BWG which examined wildlife markets in Shenzhen and Guangzhou, with special reference to Hong Kong/China trade linkages. The method used is species identification and volume monitoring carried out in eleven markets, one or more times per month. Since tightening of regulations on wildlife consumption in restaurants in Hong Kong over the past several years, many Hong Kong residents travel to Shenzhen and Guangzhou to consume wildlife in specialized restaurants. Many species are also sold as pets (e. g. birds). Preliminary figures show a total of 274 bird species, 12 mammal species, 45 amphibians, 44 species of tortoises and turtles, and 94 other reptile species for sale — a total of over 350 vertebrate species. Volume for individual species is also high in many cases. Hundreds of individuals of some duck species, for example, are available on any given day. Interestingly, species from as far away as Indonesia, Australia, and even South America were recorded.

**Recommendations:** Based on these preliminary studies, the BWG recommends:

- The Governments of China and Vietnam should consider prohibiting the cross-border trade in live animals between the two countries (for at least a trial period), and should strengthen mechanisms (customs, police, etc.) to enforce the ban. This agreement could be effected through the planned regional meeting on trade controls.

- Both countries should also move to establish effective monitoring mechanisms of other cross-border wildlife trade and use levels — to ensure that the trade and use of wildlife for food and medicinal purposes does not exceed sustainable levels.

- A mechanism should be established (e. g. one or more regional meetings) for increased dialogue and cooperation between government authorities and scientific experts in China and Vietnam (and other neighbouring countries) — including a focus on establishing guidelines for sustainable levels of harvest of various species, based on ecological studies.

—Further quantitative studies should be undertaken in selected border areas in Guangxi and other border provinces of southern China, especially Yunnan and Guangdong, to determine the nature and scale of the trade with neighbouring countries and areas (e. g. Laos, Myanmar, Hong Kong and Macau, as well as Vietnam) and lay the basis for cooperative action to control the trade.

#### 4.2 Captive breeding and conservation

There are numerous zoological gardens and captive breeding centres located throughout China run by several different agencies. In addition there is a new trend of establishing "safari parks" and other wild animal exhibits, the main purpose of which appears to be public amusement. Facilities at these establishments result in overcrowding and are rarely suitable for the well-being of animals on display and no attention is given to public education or wildlife conservation. No single national legislation or government agency is responsible for the overall administration and control of wild animals held in captivity in China and there is little or no coordination of the policies and activities of wild animal captive breeding establishments in China.

The potential contribution to conservation of endangered species able to be made by many zoos is severely constrained by their inability to use revenue obtained from entrance fees and associated support enterprise. Similarly the *ex-situ* conservation activities of many zoos and breeding centres are constrained by lack of sufficient financial resources. The majority of zoos and captive breeding centres either lack or possess poorly structured public education programs on wildlife conservation. The lack of funding for conservation or educational activities forces many zoos to include noisy amusements, entertainment sidelines and other activities quite at odds with the idea of *ex-situ* conservation or even basic animal welfare.

**Recommendations:** It is recommended that:

— The Working Group undertakes a review of the currency of the national list of specially protected wild animals and coordinates a national inventory of captive collections holding specimens of these species.

— The Working Group, in collaboration with relevant government agencies, develop a practical national policy on the role of zoos, safari parks, captive breeding centres and botanic gardens in the conservation of endangered wildlife in China.

— The Working Group, in collaboration with relevant government agencies, formulate an acceptable definition of the term "*ex-situ* conservation" and develop a nationally agreed list of priority candidate species for captive breeding for conservation purposes.

— Zoos and other wildlife exhibits which fail to meet the minimal standards of animal care should have their license to hold wild animals revoked and be converted into different types of amusement parks that do not involve the display of wild animals.

#### 4.3 The Biodiversity conservation action plan for China

In May 1994 this plan was launched as a platform document to guide biodiversity conservation in China, being the combined inputs from seven different ministries under the coordination of NEPA with assistance of international experts provided under the World Bank GEF Biodiversity A project for China.

Whilst the document may be a good first step at elaborating a national plan for a biodiversity

conservation programme, it clearly needs further refinement maybe through the development of dependent sectoral sub-plans or the development of more detailed provincial action plans.

It was decided that BWG should undertake a review of the current plan, comment on its strengths and weaknesses and advise the CCICED Council and the relevant government agencies of how to proceed towards implementation.

## 5 *Workplan of BWG for 1994~1995 Period*

The following activities are planned for the next 12 month period. Additional funding will need to be secured to undertake these activities.

- 5.1 Help with preparation of East Asian Wildlife Trade Meeting
- 5.2 Review Biodiversity Conservation Action Plan
- 5.3 Promote development of Biodiversity database
- 5.4 Extend studies of wildlife trade
- 5.5 Develop national strategy for captive breeding and *ex-situ* conservation
- 5.6 Undertake habitat restoration studies
- 5.7 Prepare study of freshwater conservation needs for China.
- 5.8 Continue to examine local *in-situ* conservation conditions as the group meets in different regions of China.