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WWF In Tibet



WWF China Tibet Program

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Lhasa, Tibet

Part One

Brief Introduction to the WWF Lhasa Office and Program

In August 1998, WWF and the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) organized the first international conference on conservation of Tibet's unique biological resources. The conference, held in Lhasa, identified critical issues and priorities for conservation in Tibet, and provided a strong foundation for the planning and implementation of future conservation activities in the TAR. In the year 2001, WWF opened an office in Lhasa. The Lhasa office played a critical role in networking with government and international agencies and now has active programs in the TAR, including in the Chang Tang Nature Reserve. WWF's efforts on the Tibetan Plateau are focused primarily on capacity building, anti-poaching, conservation management, public awareness, research, and data base development. WWF, in collaboration with national and international organizations, and with the support of its various local partners has brought a variety of conservation training programs to Tibet, including conservation management trainings, international study tours, and workshops on a variety of specific conservation issues.

WWF is the most widely recognized conservation organization in China and the only international conservation organization that has a field office with full time staff in the TAR. The WWF Lhasa office has three fulltime staff members (all local Tibetans) who are dedicated to protecting Tibet's natural resources and are responsible for development and implementation of conservation projects in the TAR and other Tibetan areas of China.

Chang Tang Nature Reserve

The WWF Tibet Field Office has signed a renewable 5-year memorandum of understanding (MOU) with its key partner, the Tibet Forestry Bureau (TFB). Over the last eight years, WWF and the TFB have jointly carried out numerous conservation activities in the Chang Tang Nature Reserve. Based on a needs assessment conducted by WWF and the TFB, WWF established wildlife protection stations in the reserve to strengthen anti-poaching capacity. Reserve managers were trained to carry out wildlife monitoring surveys, signposts were erected to facilitate improved management of the reserve, and a series of workshops were conducted to generate conservation awareness amongst local leaders, reserve managers, and nomads. Selected managers were trained in specific skills,



including project management, data collection, computers, and GIS. Development and distribution of conservation awareness materials in both Tibetan and Chinese languages is another key task of WWF Lhasa office. In order to tackle poverty and human-wildlife conflicts in the Chang Tang Reserve, WWF has implemented model projects for community based development and natural resource management.

Asian Big Cat (ABC) Conservation Project



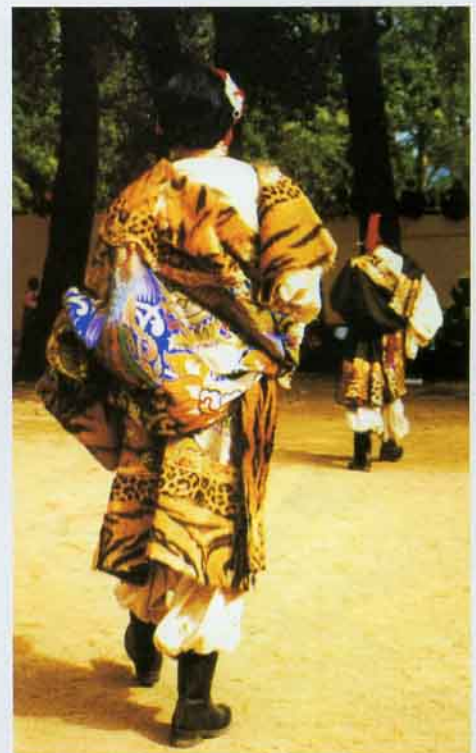
[[Figure 1 ABC skin products selling in Barkhor Street, Lhasa]]

UK to share their experience, regional information, and to develop ABC conservation strategies. The Lhasa workshop proceedings were published in November in English, with introductions in Tibetan and Chinese. In order to better understand the attitudes of consumers towards ABC skins and traditional dress and gauge consumer wildlife conservation knowledge, WWF and TRAFFIC jointly conducted a survey on ABC skin consumption in Tibet. The survey report is included in the workshop proceedings.

The WWF Lhasa office will implement most of the activities in the proposed ABC project with support and cooperation of the Tibet Forestry Bureau. The China Customs Lhasa Office, Commerce and Industry Bureau, People's Congress, and School Text Development Bureau will assist in implementing a number of ABC awareness activities. WWF will also partner with the media, schools, and monasteries to educate the public and raise awareness about the need for wildlife conservation amongst groups such as students, reporters, and Buddhist believers.

The WWF Lhasa office has already contacted the media and key celebrities about developing conservation-oriented TV programs with the Tibet Forestry Bureau. WWF and The Bridge Fund (TBF)

In July of 2005, the WWF Lhasa office organized a workshop on "Curbing Asian Big Cat Skin Market Demand" with the support of the WWF China Beijing office, WWF-US, WWF-UK, WWF-International Tiger Program and the WWF-IUCN joint wildlife trade program "TRAFFIC". It was the first workshop to discuss the ABC skin market in Tibet and China, and an action plan was developed to control and stop this illegal trade. WWF invited participants from China, Hong Kong S.A.R., Nepal, Bhutan, the USA, and the



[[Figure 2 A typical Chuba with ABC skin]]

have also developed conservation brochures and posters, which will be printed and distributed before the Tibetan New Year.

To ensure the effectiveness of the project in achieving the goal of curbing market demand for ABC skins and improving the state of ABC conservation, WWF will periodically conduct internal and external evaluations. The first internal evaluation will be conducted six months after the start of the project, and this evaluation report will be distributed to partners, donors, and other relevant organizations. The WWF Lhasa office will form an internal evaluation team composed of WWF Lhasa, WWF Beijing, and TBF staff members. External evaluation of the ABC project will be conducted after one year by an outside consulting firm hired by WWF to conduct the evaluation.

Part Two

Brief Introduction to Chang Tang Projects

Co-management Project



[[Figure 3 Rangers Conducting Patrol]]

In 2002 six wildlife protection stations were established in the Chang Tang Nature Reserve, and all stations were supplied with communications and transportation equipment. WWF and its partner, the Tibet Forestry Bureau, plan to establish more stations in the northern areas of the Chang Tang reserve. Rangers assigned to wildlife protection stations were trained in basic wildlife monitoring and patrol techniques, and the stations also promote the participation of local nomads in wildlife protection efforts.

Compensation Fund

Human-wildlife conflict is a large problem inside the Chang Tang reserve, especially in Tsonyi and Nyima Counties. Brown bears kill livestock - primarily sheep and goats, break into houses and steal food, and attack nomads, while wild yaks attack domestic yaks and their owners. These conflicts have led to retaliatory killing of wildlife and are extremely detrimental to wildlife conservation efforts in the reserve. Presently, local governments do not have sufficient funding to address this issue, but it is essential that local capacity to



[[Figure 4 Nomad House Destroyed by Brown Bear]]

resolve this issue be developed. One method is by developing sustainable, income-generating projects to finance victim compensation funds that discourage retaliatory killing of endangered Tibetan brown bears and wild yaks. WWF has undertaken two such projects described below.

Tsonyi County Greenhouse



|| Figure 5 A Tibetan Wolf ||

In discussions with officials from Tsonyi County, WWF and the Tsonyi government identified a commercial greenhouse project as one high-priority project to be used to increase local capacity to resolve conservation issues such as human-wildlife conflict. It is believed that the proposed greenhouse project is one of the best options to empower locals to address these conflicts by using the profits from greenhouse-raised produce sold in Tsonyi County, Nagchu, and Lhasa to finance a compensation fund for victims of human-wildlife conflict.

In July of 2005, WWF supported construction of a greenhouse near the Tsonyi County seat, and provided necessary training to a project manager assigned by the Tsonyi County government. A good quality greenhouse and responsible, trained manager will be vital for the project to be profitable. 50% of the project income will be contributed to a compensation fund for victims of property damage caused by bears and wild yaks, with the remaining 50% being reinvested into the project's operating budget. Although the size of the fund is relatively small, it will be the first fund to compensate nomads for economic losses caused by wildlife. The project will also provide an opportunity to improve the overall variety of the local food supply.

Nyima County Livestock Sales

In order to prevent retaliatory killing of Tibetan brown bears and wild yaks in Nyima county, WWF is sponsoring the creation of a second compensation funds for victims. It has been decided that the forestry bureau and township will run a small business that will purchase sheep in remote rural areas and resell them in the town of Nyima. According to the initial market survey conducted for this portion of the project, live sheep are far cheaper in the remote areas of the countryside



|| Figure 6 Pastoral life in the Chang Tang ||

than in town. For example, a sheep costs ¥170 yuan (US \$21) in Drong-tsang but ¥290 (US \$36) in the town of Nyima. At present there is a rather large market for mutton in Nyima, and only a few individual traders involved in the business, resulting in low competition. Therefore, it is expected that the business will be able to run profitably and be able to finance the compensation fund. Proceeds from enterprise will be used in the same way as for the Tsonyi greenhouse project; with 50% of the income being contributed to the compensation fund while the remaining 50% is reinvested in project operations. It is expected the compensation fund will not only reduce retaliatory killing of wildlife but also motivate local nomads to actively participate in wildlife protection efforts.

Bear-human Conflict Survey

In order to better understand the key problems of the Chang Tang Nature Reserve and increase the overall management capacity of the reserve's staff, WWF has conducted



[[Figure 7 Nomad House Attacked by Brown Bear]]

a formal survey (2002), informal studies (2003, 2004), and organized workshops (2003, 2004) in the reserve. The survey, studies and workshops have identified human-wildlife conflict as one of the key issues in the reserve. This conflict is a major reason for the killing of wildlife, as nomads are losing livestock to wildlife with increasing frequency and are at times themselves injured or killed by wild animals while defending their homes and herds. WWF's Lhasa office is keen to understand the root causes of conflict between bears and herders in the Chang Tang

reserve, and to develop methods for resolving conflicts between herders and bears, as well as between herders and other wild species such as the wild yak and Tibetan wild ass.

The currently on-going survey seeks to understand the extent and causes of human-wildlife conflict in Nyima and Tsonyi counties, and to evaluate the effectiveness of the trial Tsonyi County victims' compensation fund in reducing human-wildlife conflicts. At the same time, the survey interviews and field workshops are generating conservation awareness among inhabitants of the Chang Tang reserve.

Communication

Chang Tang Project Brochure

The WWF China Tibet Program has recently published an English language brochure titled "Saving Plateau Biodiversity in Tibet". This brochure provides a brief introduction to the Tibet Plateau, the Chang



Tang Nature Reserve, Tibetan nomads, and WWF's present and future work in the Chang Tang.

Entering the Chang Tang (film)

WWF has produced a 30-minute film about the Chang Tang Nature Reserve and WWF's Chang Tang conservation program titled "Entering the Chang Tang". It is the first film to present an introduction to the natural resources of the Chang Tang reserve, as well as discussing current threats to conservation efforts in the reserve.



Note:

In addition to the above activities, WWF's Tibet program also has produced and distributed numerous conservation handbooks, posters, and brochures and organized environmental training programs to educate the general public about the need for conservation.

|| Figure 8 Wild yak in Chang Tang ||

Part Three

Brief Introduction to ABC Projects

Workshop on "Curbing Market Demand for Asian Big Cat Skins" and Publication of Workshop Proceedings

The WWF Lhasa office and TRAFFIC (the joint WWF-IUCN wildlife trade monitoring network) held the "workshop on Curbing Market Demand for Asian Big Cat Skins" in Lhasa on August 3-6, 2005.

In recent years, Asian Big Cat (ABC) skins and other ABC parts have become major items of illegal trade in Asia, particularly in the Himalayan regions. It is an ancient tradition in eastern Tibet to decorate clothing hems with animal skins. It is believed that animal skins represent one's social status and prosperity. This custom originated in the Tibetan military, and was carried on by some aristocratic families and Eastern Tibetans until the 1950's. Since the 1980's, when the local economy started to boom, this tradition was revived in Amdo, and has also become fashionable in Lhasa and other Tibetan communities in China. In Lhasa and Amdo, many Tibetan families own 1-3 articles of clothing with parts made of animal skins. In addition, local officials, TV reporters, singers, and actors often wear skins of endangered animals without any restrictions or guilt.

This phenomenon mirrors the Shahtoosh fashion in the west. Thousands of endangered animals are hunted every year in the Himalayas to meet this market demand. Skins are made into fashionable clothing and sold in almost every town in Tibet. For instance, there are 19 shops selling endangered animal skin products on Lhasa's Barkhor Street alone, and many of them sell raw skin materials as well.



|| Figure 9 ABC workshop organized in Lhasa ||

Here, one also finds individual sellers openly displaying skins.

WWF and TRAFFIC realize the importance of appealing to end users to help in the fight to conserve ABC species, and the goal of the Lhasa workshop was to start a program targeting ABC skin consumers and markets. The workshop analyzed the current status of the ABC skin trade, market, and consumption, and a key output of the workshop was a conservation strategy devised to tackle the ABC market and consumption. In order to disseminate the workshops findings, the WWF Lhasa office has published the proceedings of the event, which includes reports from TRAFFIC and WWF country offices in Nepal, Bhutan, India, and China, as well as the conservation strategy that was adopted during the event. The workshop was held with the generous support of WWF-US and WWF-UK.

Seminar on Cites Enforcement, Implementation, and Cites List Species Held in Sichuan

The “seminar on CITES Enforcement, Implementation, and CITES List Species” was held in Ya-an, Sichuan, China on December 22, 2005. The seminar was organized by CITES China, the WWF Lhasa office, Conservation International, the International Fund for Animal Welfare, and various government agencies. The workshop focused on western China, and officials responsible for CITES enforcement from Tibet, Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu, and Qinghai participated. It was the first gathering of all key law enforcement units to discuss enforcement of laws relevant to the ABC skin trade in Western China. The organizers not only invited CITES staff from all five provinces, but also welcomed representatives from the Customs, Commerce and Industry, and Forest Police Departments, as well as from the Nature Reserve Management Office, Forest Bureau, and Northeast Forest University. A total of 37 people participated in the two-day workshop.

The ABC skin market and consumption were the main topics of the workshop, and government and NGO representatives presented reports on the current status of trade in ABC skins, ongoing ABC conservation projects, as well as results of recent ABC related surveys. WWF's representative, Dawa Tsering, gave a presentation on the history of trade and consumption of ABC skins in Tibet and discussed WWF's on-going projects. Seminar participants presented the following recommendations:



[[Figure 10 Enforcement Workshop, Ya-an, Sichuan]]

- 1) Law enforcement units and NGOs should jointly develop educational materials aimed specifically at potential ABC skin consumers in Tibetan communities, where religion can also be used as a tool to educate both consumers and skin traders;
- 2) Strengthen law enforcement capacity in order to close open markets for ABC skins;
- 3) Promote participation by the general public in ABC conservation programs, particularly by high profile local officials;
- 4) Improve information sharing amongst law enforcement units, and have these units take joint action aimed at ending the trade in ABC skins.

Workshop on ABC Conservation and Tibetan Culture

On December 25 2005, Conservation International (CI), The Bridge Fund (TBF), and WWF held a meeting in Chengdu, Sichuan to discuss the ABC conservation program. Participants from the Gantse Tibetan Prefecture, Qinghai, Sichuan, and Beijing were invited. Tibetan scholars, members of various religious orders, biologists, and conservationists gathered to discuss traditional Tibetan dress, analyze current policies on traditional culture and nature conservation, and to develop an ABC conservation strategy for the Tibetan regions. The purpose of the meeting was to shed light on the impact of traditional Tibetan dress on current ABC conservation efforts, to develop strategies for putting an end to the trade in ABC skins in all Tibetan regions, and to plan a large conference on ABC Conservation and Tibetan Culture. WWF, CI, and TBF agreed to implement joint conservation projects in Tibetan communities, and the following activities were planned:

- 1) Organize a conference on ABC conservation and Tibetan culture;



|| **Figure 11 Developing Action Plan** ||

2) Share resources and information on ABC surveys, and jointly develop education materials;

3) Develop a conservation campaign for next year's "kampa Art Festival" in Qinghai Province's Yushu Tibetan Prefecture.

COMMUNICATION
Humans and Wildlife

The WWF Lhasa office, in cooperation with the Tibetan Art Research Institute, has

developed a cross-talk television program to be broadcast on the Tibetan New Year, February 28, 2006. The program is called "Humans and Wildlife", and it will be performed in the Tibetan language. Tobden and Mingma, two very famous Tibetan television stars, will present the program on the annual "Tibetan New Year's Party" television broadcast. The program discusses both wildlife protection and the use of ABC skins, but will focus on the ABC skin problem. The program emphasizes the importance of protecting local animals such as Tibetan antelope, wild yak, black-necked crane, and snow leopard; presents a brief history of Tibetan traditional clothing; and discusses the ecological consequences of wearing ABC skin products. It will be the first television program encouraging Tibetans not to buy and wear traditional clothing made from ABC skins. The length of the program will be 17 minutes.



|| **Figure 12 Cross-talk Presentation** ||

Hearing The Tiger's Cry

The WWF Lhasa office and Tibet Television are currently producing a 30-second public service announcement called "Hearing the Tiger's Cry", to be aired during the Tibetan New Year celebration at the end of February. The announcement features footage and a message about the problem of poaching of ABC species and the trade in ABC skins. Once production is completed, the announcement will be shown on a number of TV stations in China.

Survey Report on Illegal Trade, Market, and Consumption of Asian Big Cats Skins in Tibet

In order to better understand the demand for ABC skins in Tibetan communities of China, the WWF Lhasa office and TRAFFIC recently conducted a survey in Lhasa



and Nagchu Prefectures on the trade and consumption of ABC skins. The survey asked for basic information about the interviewee, such as age, job, cash income, educational background and sex; then asked if the interviewee owned clothes made from ABC animal skins; opinions of such of clothes; the interviewees level of understanding of wildlife protection and conservation laws, and their attitude to wildlife protection work in the future. The goal of the survey was to design and develop effective conservation measures to educate consumers, and to reduce and control the consumption of animal skins.

Analysis of the survey's findings led to formulation of recommendations for development of an ABC conservation strategy that combines improved law enforcement with consumer education - a strategy that will be the basis of WWF's future actions to help protect Asia's endangered big cats. The WWF Lhasa office is currently preparing a survey summary report that will be submitted to People's Congress as a policy recommendation.



|| Figure 13 Leopard Skin Chuba ||

WWF's mission is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.





Office location and address:

Room 1206, Lhasa Tashi Nortia Hotel
No. 24 North Linkuo Road
Lhasa 850000, Tibet, China
Phone/Fax: 0891-636-4380
Email: dawa@wwfchina.org
Website: <http://www.wwfchina.org>

Key government partner: The Tibet Forestry Bureau

Main Conservation Programs: Tibet Biodiversity Conservation Project (focus on the Chang Tang Nature Reserve) and Asian Big Cat Conservation Project

Lhasa Office Staff:

Dawa Tsering (Tibetan), Program Director (full-time position);
Tenzin Lundrop (Tibetan), Policy Consultant (Part-time position);
Nima Chudron (Tibetan), Finance and Office Manager, (full-time position);
Pubu Wangdui (Tibetan), Driver (full-time position).



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