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Leadership in Action

MAY-JULY 2025

SANJIANGYUAN NATIONAL PARK & QILIAN MOUNTAIN NATIONAL PARK
QINGHAI, CHINA

青海 · 三江源国家公园 & 祁连山国家公园

Grasslands and Wetlands on the Tibetan Plateau

I was fortunate to join Shan Shui Conservation Centre in their work on wetland and grassland conservation in Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture, Qinghai Province, located in the core area of Sanjiangyuan National Park. Sanjiangyuan literally means 'the source of three rivers'—the Yangtze, Yellow, and Lancang (Mekong)—three of the most important rivers in China and East Asia. The landscape is defined by alpine grasslands, high-altitude wetlands, and glacier-fed rivers that provide critical habitats for species such as the Tibetan fox, Tibetan gazelle, kiang, and black-necked crane. Equally significant is the region's cultural heritage: Tibetan pastoralist communities maintain centuries-old traditions of herding, spiritual practices, and coexistence with wildlife, with mountains, lakes, and rivers often considered sacred.

Finding snow leopards

From June 3 to 10, we carried out a field mission in Qilian Mountain National Park to retrieve infrared camera trap data. The cameras, positioned across mountains and cliffs, are used to record the presence of snow leopards. Our team drove 14 hours from Yushu to Qilian, camped in the ranger station, and hiked daily to collect the camera data.

Raptor breeding surveys

Exposed power lines often caused bird electrocutions. To address this, the State Grid insulated the lines and installed numerous artificial nests to provide safe breeding sites for raptors. Our work involved conducting regular breeding surveys, using binoculars and drones to monitor the species and breeding status in each artificial nest. Common raptors in the area include the upland buzzard, saker falcon, and steppe eagle.

Grasslands adaptation experiments

Due to overgrazing and climate change, the grasslands have shown significant degradation. To address this, we designed a grassland restoration experiment, testing different seed and sowing treatments (pre-germinated vs. untreated seeds; soil enriched with dung vs. chemical fertilizer; row sowing vs. broadcasting; with vs. without plastic film cover). By cultivating under these varied conditions, we aim to identify effective methods for rapid and sustainable grassland recovery.

Installing fishways

Supporting local women's handicraft

Acknowledgement: Shan Shui Conservation Center

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