



Annual Report 2017



PLATEAU PERSPECTIVES

Community Development & Conservation



Our Goals

- To integrate sustainable development and conservation in the high mountain regions of the Tibetan Plateau, Himalayas and Central Asia
- To bring the voices and knowledge of local and indigenous custodians of the land into development planning, practice, and policy dialogues
- To increase the resilience of communities and ecosystems and improve livelihoods and wellbeing of mountain people
- To bring emergency relief in times of crisis, in areas where Plateau Perspectives is working



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Highlights of 2017

Digital Field Guides

The Concept

Citizen Science has become a mainstay of scientific research and of community conservation efforts. Plateau Perspectives staff have developed **Lapis Guides**, a digital field guide that allows researchers, universities, schools, protected areas, community members and just about anyone to build their own field guide with 'citizen science' functions for data collection and sharing. Users can submit GPS locations, photographs and notes for any sighting, and all data are automatically uploaded and stored on our server. Data can later be viewed, downloaded, and analysed by project members – with the goal of contributing to research as well as biodiversity conservation and other project purposes.





Photographs from the Lapis Guides “Butterflies of Kyrgyzstan” digital field guide

The Benefits

This tool allows community members to gather scientific data and contribute to environmental conservation, preservation of cultural heritage, community development, and other project goals as set out within the different guides and data collection instruments. Participatory approaches lead to greater sense of ownership and long-term commitment to project purposes.

Key Features

- The **Field Guide** allows users to browse species or other items within the mini app – viewing photos and reading other useful information
- **Maps** provide precise location data for all the sightings
- **My data** allows users to build a virtual image library of their own sightings, from wildlife to archaeological sites!
- **Citizen Science** allows users to work with specialists and identify species, document their distributions, and contribute to a wide range of project goals

Tajikistan

Yagnob Valley in Northwest Tajikistan is home to the direct descendants of the Sogdians, an ancient Persian race, speaking their own language and with distinct cultural traditions and customs not seen anywhere else in the world. Although



situated only a few hours' drive from the capital, Dushanbe, the valley has very limited infrastructure. The people's living conditions are basic and the area is recognized for exceptional biodiversity. Plateau Perspectives was invited to visit the communities to gain a greater understanding of their way of life, their traditions, and their current development situation, and to discuss how to improve health, basic education and economic opportunities in culturally sensitive ways.



Murgab District in the high Pamirs mountains of Eastern Tajikistan is home for several thousand Kyrgyz pastoralists. A Plateau Perspectives team went to meet

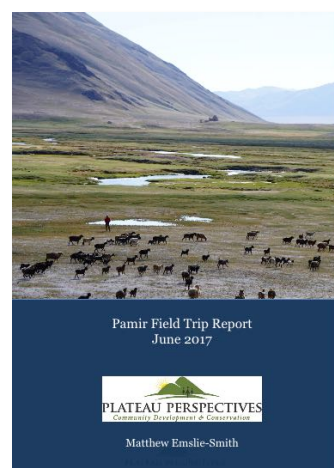


these nomad communities and learn more about their health and other needs. Several patients were seen. Discussions also were held with key stakeholders about how to best protect wildlife and mountain habitats while strengthening viable livelihoods for the people there.

A second field trip was carried out to other valleys in the Murgab area and interviews were conducted with local stakeholders including school teachers, health workers, pastoralists and community conservation organisations.



Several local gaps in development and conservation were noted by communities themselves, including access to water, electricity, health care, economic opportunities, and emerging human-wildlife conflicts.



China

The **Qomolangma (Mt Everest) Glacier Foundation** (QGF) was recently set up in the Tibet Autonomous Region and is now being led by Dr Gongbo Tashi, who also has long served as country director for Plateau Perspectives China. QGF has promoted environmental awareness and provided research scholarships in the Agricultural and Animal Husbandry College of Tibet University. Support also was provided in 2017 for a two-week handicraft training workshop for people with disabilities in Dingri County, situated near Mt Everest.

Annual environmental activities conducted by university teachers and students also include trainings, surveys, research, and awareness. A monitoring of birds and butterflies also has begun. In 2017, QGF co-organized an **expedition to the South Pole** as part of the 'China Hundred Enterprises Environmental Initiative.'

More directly tied to Plateau Perspectives, the **community cooperatives** set up several years ago continue to work independently, with occasional discussions and advice inputs from external staff members. Herder and farmer groups have focused on different livelihoods and development options, including animal husbandry, community based tourism, and agricultural development. The **development of quinoa** has continued, and now discussions have begun about bringing this speciality highland crop to restaurants and markets across China.

In Qinghai Province, Plateau Perspectives staff enabled a **rehabilitation training** in Yushu town, continuing the development of disability services in the region. Local health and rehab trainers taught in the premises that were equipped and developed by earlier by Plateau Perspectives, following the 2010 earthquake.

Plateau Perspectives also was **highlighted at conferences** at the University of Tsukubu in Japan, and at a Canadian studies national conference held in China.



Kyrgyzstan

With all the **troubles in Afghanistan**, many people have been displaced in recent years. Kyrgyzstan recently received many Kyrgyz herding families coming from the Wakhan Corridor, situated between Tajikistan and Pakistan. These families now live in proximity to other agro-pastoral communities in Naryn Province. However, many others have had to flee due to direct risk to their lives – including large numbers of the **Hazara nationality**. As refugees, they need to find another country that welcomes them, which is not straightforward. Some families find sponsors and can gain access to new homes in Canada and elsewhere. However, others remain without such means and are still living in very difficult positions.

Plateau Perspectives staff have been assisting, informally as volunteer help, with accommodation, food, clothing and education **for several refugee families** now residing in Kyrgyzstan. English teaching is offered for the women and children. Although primarily a relief project, preparing people for eventual settlement in other countries also has clear long-lasting benefits, as well as providing hope and friendships in the present.

Lessons Learned

This entire region has been part of the ancient Silk Road with its long history of geopolitical challenges and opportunities centred around the transport of goods through the area. Today this is still very important, especially as China seeks to revive the ancient routes and create new ones under its “**Belt & Road Initiative**.” Many opportunities and threats exist simultaneously for the mountain societies in Western China and Central Asia. Hence, in addition to all the specific projects described above, Plateau Perspectives’ founding director is an active participant in meetings drawing on his experience of China and Central Asia, seeking especially **to build bridges** that can help strengthen partnerships and also break down socio-cultural barriers. Key environmental challenges such as climate change also are considered, along with other critical development topics such as equitable sharing of benefits, food security, and culture.



Future Plans



In addition to continuing the above projects, Plateau Perspectives seeks to advance the following activities:

- **Yagnob Valley, Tajikistan** – return to assess health needs and to further advance collaboration with partners
- **Sanjiangyuan National Park** (Qinghai Province) and **Mt Everest Nature Reserve** (Tibet Autonomous Region), China – PP staff will support these ‘protected areas’ with biodiversity conservation and community co-management (incl. Lapis Guides field guides)



In Memory

This year brought a huge loss. It is with great sadness that we report the passing of Dr Tony Whitten. As recently noted in The Guardian, Tony “was an inspirational figure in global conservation circles thanks to his collaboration with religious groups and his passionate advocacy for some of the world’s least-known creatures.”

We were very privileged to have his support for the work of Plateau Perspectives through his participation on our international Council of Reference from 2004 until 2012, and have a deep sense of gratitude.



Who's Who

International Council of Reference

Dr Calvin DeWitt, Professor of Environmental Studies, Univ of Wisconsin, Madison
Sir Brian Heap CBE ScD FRS, Cambridge University
Dr John Hodges, Consultant, formerly with UN FAO
Sir John Polkinghorne KBE FRS, Cambridge University
Sir Ghilleen Prance FRS VMH, former Director of Kew Royal Botanic Gardens
Dr John Sale, former senior consultant for UNDP as biodiversity specialist
Mr Matthias Stiefel, Executive Director, WSP International
Mr David Taylor, Executive Advisor in Humanitarian Assistance,
Dr Normal Wirzba, Professor of Theology and Ecology, Duke University

Board of Directors, Plateau Perspectives Canada

Dr Barry Adams (Treasurer), Alberta Environment and Parks (retired)
Dr Leonardo Cabrera, Aboriginal Affairs Secretariat, Parks Canada
Dr Peter Foggin (Secretary), Honorary Professor, Dept of Geography, University of Montreal
Mr Wilbur A Kent, development expert, Latin America and Caribbean
Dr Walter Willms (Chair), Rangeland Ecologist and formerly Agriculture & Agri-Food, Canada

Trustees, Plateau Perspectives Scotland

Dr Andrew Barbour, Chairman, Tayside Biodiversity Partnership, Scotland
Dr Jeremy Begbie, Professor, Divinity School, Duke University
Dr Alistair Emslie-Smith (Treasurer), Lead Clinician, Tayside Diabetes Clinical Network
Dr Katherine Emslie-Smith, General Practitioner, Arthurstone Medical Centre
Rev Prof Alan Torrance (Chair), Director of Logos Institute, University of St Andrews
Mrs Margaret Torrance, former Deputy Head of Queen's College Prep School, London
Dr Charles Warren, Sr. Lecturer, Geography & Sustainable Development, Univ of St Andrews



Publications

Levine, J., Isaeva, A., Eddy, I., **Foggin, M.**, Gergel, S., Hagerman, S., and Zerriffi, H. 2017. A cognitive approach to the post-Soviet Central Asian pasture puzzle: new data from Kyrgyzstan. Regional Environmental Change (online). DOI 10.1007/s10113-017-1122-8

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Foggin, J.M., and **Torrance-Foggin, M.E.** 2017. Pastoralism, Development, and the Future of Tibetan Rangelands: Experiences in the Development and Provision of Social Services and Environmental Management, pp.175-186 in A. Gruschke & I. Breuer (eds) (Chap. 13), Tibetan Pastoralists and Development: Negotiating the Future of Grassland Livelihoods. Wiesbaden: Reichert.

Foggin, J.M., and **Gongbo Tashi.** 2017. Achieving Sustainability through community level partnerships in the Third Pole Environment (TPE): Experiences in inclusive biodiversity conservation in the Sanjiangyuan Region, Qinghai Province, China. Presentation given at *Third Pole Science Summit* in Kunming, China, July 2017.

<https://www.slideshare.net/marcfoggin/inclusive-biodiversity-conservation-in-the-third-pole-environment>.

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Foggin, M. (editor). 2018. Proceedings of International Workshop Silk Roads in the Mountains of Central Asia: Ancient Routes & Modern Challenges in Times of Global Change, held in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on 3-4 October 2017. Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan: Mountain Societies Research Institute, University of Central Asia.





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