

A Multistakeholder Exercise to Identify Research and Conservation Priorities for Asian Elephants in China

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gecco.2021.e01561>

For which topic were research priorities identified?

conservation of Asian elephants

In which location was the research priority setting conducted?

Asia - China

Why was it conducted at all?

Despite these efforts, gaps remain in the research and conservation of Chinese elephants. Research is fragmented and the limited communication among research groups, coupled with the challenges of conserving elephants in human-dominated landscapes, has resulted in failures to translate research into conservation practice. China's rapidly increasing research capacity and political commitment to conservation allow for evidence-based strategies and multi-sectorial collaborations to be established to reconcile tensions between conservation and economic development. In this context it is important to develop research and conservation agendas that help guide effective protection for Chinese elephants.

What was the objective?

to identify and rank priorities for Chinese elephant research and conservation

What was the outcome?

a list of 8 research topics

How long did the research prioritization take?

Survey: June 2019. Workshop: June 2019

Which methods were used to identify research priorities?

survey; workshop

How were the priorities for research identified exactly?

Step 1: survey: to collect research priorities, core team of four experts defined broad themes under which research and conservation issues could be categorized, participants were asked to list as many relevant research and conservation issues as they considered appropriate within each theme, 656 issues (337 research questions and 319 conservation issues) submitted. Step 2: workshop: submissions were discussed and consolidated in small groups, resulting in list of 251 (121 research questions and 130 conservation issues) issues, participants then voted on their priorities and appropriate timelines (as short-, mid-, or long-term issues): each participant received small stickers (each representing one vote) and was asked to vote for up to three top priority issues within each theme and assign them the suitable timeline, resulting in top three issues within each theme (making a total of 55 priority issues), 8 prioritized research topics

Which stakeholders took part?

Government officers, academics, NGOs, private companies with different forms of involvement in elephant research and conservation. Survey: 30 participants: 33% from government agencies and nature reserves, 23% NGOs, 23% academics, 17% students, 3% from private sector. Workshop: 44 participants: 32% from government agencies and nature reserves, 27% academics, 18% students, 14% NGOs, 9% from private companies.

How were stakeholders recruited?

The survey was distributed widely among relevant stakeholders in China using a snowball sampling strategy.

Were stakeholders actively involved or did they just participate?

Stakeholders were mere participants of the research prioritization process; they were not actively involved in the process.