

Safeguarding China's botanical heritage: BGCI's integrated conservation programme in China

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Abstract

China's rich floral diversity includes more than 31,000 vascular plant species, representing 10% of all known plant species. Over half of these species are endemic to China. However, China's rapid economic development in the last 30 years and continuous population growth has seriously damaged plant resources and the ecological environment, resulting in over-exploitation of plant resources and a dramatic increase in the number of endangered species. There are nearly 4,000 to 5,000 higher plants that are now threatened or on the verge of extinction. To help halt the loss of Chinese plant diversity, BGCI opened its first office based in Guangzhou in 2007. This office works along with Chinese partners securing Chinese plant diversity through integrated conservation approach, reintroduction/population reinforcement, engagement of local communities to conservation activities, capacity building in horticulture and environmental education and public outreach.

Key words

Capacity building; Integrated conservation; Local community; Reinforcement; Reintroduction

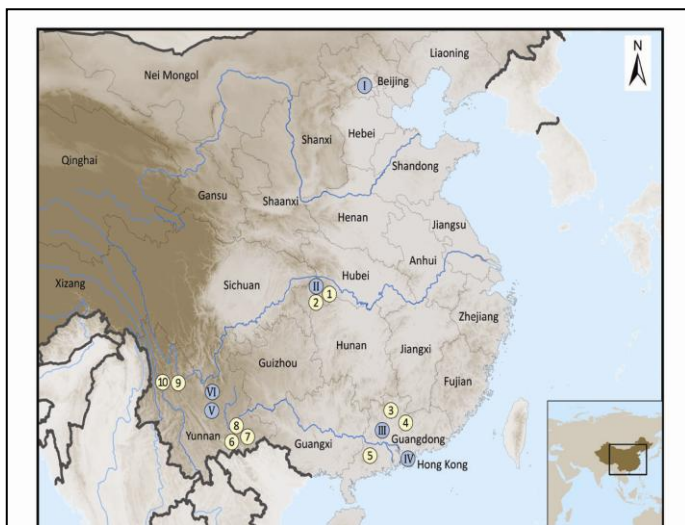
Introduction

China's rich floral diversity includes more than 31,000 vascular plant species, representing 10% of all known plant species. Over half of these species are endemic to China. However, China's rapid economic development in the last 30 years and continuous population growth has seriously damaged plant resources and the ecological environment, resulting in over-exploitation of plant resources and a dramatic increase in the number of endangered species. There are nearly 4,000 to 5,000 higher plants that are now threatened or on the verge of extinction.



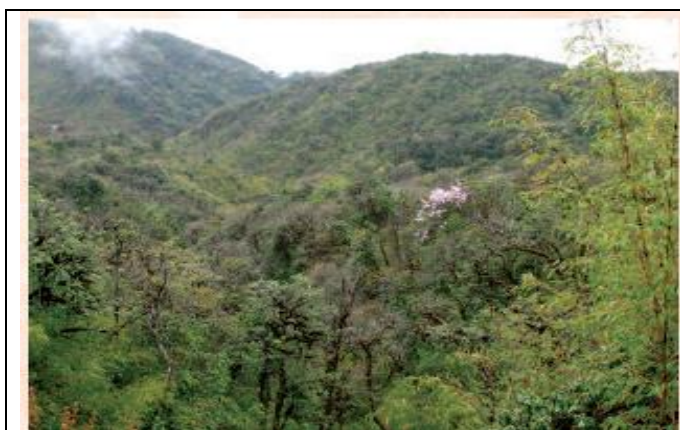
BGCI was instrumental in bringing together three state agencies to create the China's Strategy for Plant Conservation (CSPC) which balances the development needs of China with its conservation imperatives. To assist in the implementation of CSPC, BGCI opened its first ever office in China in 2007. This office working along with Chinese partners are implementing the CSPC especially focusing on the targets 7 and 8, securing *ex situ* collections and restoring wild populations of critically endangered and endangered trees in China.

BGCI's work in China



BGCI's integrated conservation projects in China currently comprise as many as 30 rare and/or highly endangered species, such as *Bretschneidera sinensis*, *Dipteronia dyeriana*, *Davidia involucrata* or *Euryodendron excelsum*, as well as a number of other species, including magnolias, oaks, maples, and rhododendrons.

BGCI China projects location map



In situ conservation in Zhi-ben-shan Mountain, Yunnan province

Ex situ conservation of *Davidia involucrata*

BGCI seeks to promote the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders in its conservation programmes enabling them to voice their needs. Fostering dialogue among local communities, and authorities from local to national levels is significant to define locally appropriate conservation and management approaches. Local level stakeholder workshops form the basis to decide on and sanction conservation action such as species reintroduction and population reinforcement programmes.

Through attending BGCI's local level workshop, local people realized the importance of protecting plants and established their own threatened plants nursery and applied grants from other funding resources successfully with the help of BGCI project leaders.



Consultation with local community



Local people established their own nursery with the help of BGCI project leaders