

ECCP Track: Practice

Meeting 3

30 May, 10h CET, Zoom

Presentation on PARTNERS principles for community-based conservation by Dr. Justine Shanti Alexander, Executive Director of the Snow Leopard Network and Senior Conservation Scientist at the Snow Leopard Trust:

- [A recording of this meeting is available here.](#)
- [The PPT is available here.](#)
- This work isn't new, but is increasingly on the global stage
 - The COP15 biodiversity framework from December 2022 includes direct engagement with local communities as one of their key targets (target 22).
 - Growing recognition that we need to reflect on how we've done conservation and how we can shift it moving forward.
- Snow leopard conservation differs from other big cat conservation
 - Big cat conservation has evolved over time - it largely focused on creating protected areas and moving people out.
 - Instead, snow leopards have a need for coexistence in multi-use land spaces. They need large areas - 250 k squared for a single individual male cat.
 - And how do we promote this coexistence? Community-led conservation efforts.
- Snow leopards
 - They live across Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan:
 - About 2 million kilometers squared
 - Crossing many national borders
 - They carry strong cultural significance
- Community projects have seriously shifted over the past 30 years
 - Early community initiatives focused on women and economic incentives (handicrafts, etc.) in exchange for agreements not to kill snow leopards
 - 30 years later, the same women who were engaged in the early projects are now the leaders of small committees actively doing conservation work.
 - They now oversee "community responsible areas," or small protected areas. Their work is bringing communities together to design locally led initiatives for protection.
 - The reach of organizations coming together is about 300 communities
 - 10% of protected space
- Challenges across the snow leopard range include:
 - Lack of resources
 - Lack of legal recognition on the land

- External threats like large-scale mining or other government priorities
- The conservation sector is not effectively equipped to do ethical conservation
- The PARTNERS principles for conservation are
 - Presence
 - Aptness
 - Respect
 - Transparency
 - Negotiations
 - Empathy
 - Responsiveness
 - Strategic support
- These principles are described at length in a book, academic paper, and training
 - Learn more and explore the principles here:
 - <https://snowleopard.org/our-work/conservation-programs/partners-principles-of/>
 - They have been adopted by all 12 governments in the snow leopard range
 - Who committed to training more than 500 conservationists in 5 years
 - Have reached about 54% so far (270 conservationists)
 - Policy recommendations have emerged
 - Training the trainers
- Partners Conservation Alliance
 - Was established after a meeting of [Whitley Award winners](#) from all over the world, who came together last year to exchange on different conservation challenges and approaches around the world
 - Rooted in indigenous knowledge and culture
 - Community leadership & putting the communities at the center of the table
 - Trying to expand these principles beyond just the snow leopard range
 - Video from the award winners speaking about what community-based conservation really is: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sRXE9wSxNFk>
 - Kashka Suu Statement on Global Biodiversity Conservation
 - The group wrote this joint statement - committing to work with more conservationists across the world on what ethical and effective community-led conservation looks like
 - They've since held trainings in 4 countries and engaged 100+ conservationists
 - Brought the statement to COP15
- “Community-led” should continue to be defined by communities
- There's a sense of momentum for change

Discussion:

- What are some of the drivers behind insecurity that you see?
 - The snow leopard range is so vast. Each area is facing different security & development challenges, so it's hard to give an overarching answer.
 - For ex, South Gobi in Mongolia has a lot of legal and illegal mining activity (copper) which can drive insecurity (although, the local director doesn't see that having a huge impact on security at this time.) In North India, we see a huge military presence. In China, insecurity can be related to government challenges. New technological developments (cameras in Kashmir, for ex) contribute to insecurity. Anywhere when priorities are different can lead to insecurity.
 - A lot of security challenges can be related to personal safety of community members and conservationists.
 - These challenges seem to be intensifying with climate change.
- Snow leopard conservation as a tool for diplomacy
 - Global Snow Leopard and Ecosystem Protection Program
 - Steering committee has reps of environment ministers of each of the 12 countries who meet annually to take stock and plan forward.
 - These countries have been meeting together each year for 10 years. If you tried to just convene a meeting each year on "peace," you would not have the same effect. Bringing countries together over conservation has created space for conversation.
 - Regular, repeated conversation allows the conversation and work to stay alive, adapt to changing circumstances.
 - There is no voting, just conversation and agreement.
 - Interest to develop training for staff working on social issues to learn more about how conservation could be a tool for peace and development.
 - However, we don't want to put *peace* at the center of the work, which could deter from its larger impact.
 - Scaling up or moving from one conversation project to another really does *not* mean copy/paste or replicating the same work in a new place.
 - The success of this model comes from putting snow leopards and communities at the center.
 - There are some challenges that we won't always be able to overcome. There are many instances where we just have to wait until things get better.
- Ecosystem approach
 - The territory of snow leopards is so huge, that you simply must engage with a *range* of different elements in the ecosystem.

- The snow leopard interacts with other species and exists in an interdependent ecosystem with animals, in high-altitude grasslands, semi-deserts, etc.
 - It's not just the cat, but the impact of climate change on the tree range, military movement in the border area and their impact on environmental degradation, etc. One third of snow leopard habitat is within 100k of international borders.
- There is so much we don't know about ecosystems in high Asia. We don't fully understand the prey/predator dynamics.
- Dynamic change is a constant.
- How can people be involved?
 - 4 June, an international run event called "Strides for Snow Leopards" - register any activity to demonstrate your solidarity: <http://register.snowleopard.org/>
 - Walk, yoga, run, climb, bike
 - Link wellbeing with conservation
 - Donation possible but optional
 - You can learn more about the PARTNERS principles and alliance here: <https://snowleopard.org/our-work/conservation-programs/partners-principles-of/>
 - Get in touch with Justine and Koustubh to connect and learn more: koustubh@snowleopard.org and justine@snowleopard.org