

Workshop on the Conservation of China's Baiji River Dolphin 2004

The international "Workshop on the Conservation of China's Baiji River Dolphin and Yangtze Finless Porpoise 2004" marked a major step forward towards successfully networking global expertise with Chinese research institutes and government authorities in an effort to secure a sustainable future for China's baiji dolphin and Yangtze freshwater ecosystem.

Wuhan, December 3, 2004 – The workshop was the first meeting of its kind in over a decade to see both Eastern and Western cetacean specialists united and working together towards finding an emergency conservation solution for the world's most endangered dolphin and its threatened freshwater habitat.

Disagreements over whether to conserve the species in the main channel of the Yangtze (what specialists call in-situ conservation) or capture and move the remaining baiji to a semi natural reserve (ex-situ conservation) have previously kept these experts on opposite sides of the world and delayed the development of an optimal conservation solution.

Recognising the ever increasing urgency of the baiji's plight and the importance of international unity during what has become a time of crisis for the whole Yangtze river ecosystem - baiji.org foundation approached the relevant stakeholders and created a workshop platform that made it possible for international relations to be rebuilt and for global expertise to help form the basis of a new conservation strategy.

From the 28th of November to 2nd December 50 specialists from China, Japan, the United States, the United Kingdom, Switzerland and Australia met in Wuhan to attend the 5-day workshop, which included a field excursion to the Tian-e-Zhou Oxbow Semi Natural Baiji Reserve, a tour of the Wuhan Baiji Dolphinarium (Baiji Base) and two days of discussions at the Institute of Hydrobiology.

Expert review and discussion focussed on providing technical advice for best practices for capture operations, husbandry and management of captive baiji, the possible next steps in the restoration of the Yangtze baiji population and issues relating to the Yangtze finless porpoise population.

The power of these faces to face discussions was indisputable. In addition to rebuilding bridges and determining that a baiji survey was the next essential step for the new conservation strategy - each participant voted in favour of establishing an International Baiji Conservation Committee that would carry forth the positive momentum of the workshop and ensure that future recommendations were acted upon.



The proposed committee will be responsible for coordinating all efforts to save the baiji and providing expertise and advice to the Chinese government on preferred practices for conserving the baiji and the Yangtze finless porpoise. It will also coordinate the use of international funding and “in kind” support for baiji conservation. The baiji.org Foundation is currently spearheading the development and coordination of this initiative (see “initiatives” for further details).

The workshop was hosted by the Wuhan Institute of Hydrobiology (The Chinese Academy of Sciences). Co-organized by the baiji.org Foundation and Administrative Committee of Changjiang Fisheries Resource (Ministry of Agriculture of China). Supported by the baiji.org Foundation, Conservation International and Budweiser Wuhan.

Media Contact

Leigh Barrett
+44 77 997 049 46
leigh@baiji.org