



**IUCN SSC China Species
Specialist Group**



Conservation Success Stories

**Restoring the Chinese
Luehdorfia Butterfly through
public engagement and
habitat conservation**



Restoring the Chinese Luehdorfia Butterfly through public engagement and habitat conservation

IMPLEMENTED BY

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Over 1,000
awareness
events
have
increased
public
engagement



THREAT ADDRESSED

The Chinese Luehdorfia Butterfly (*Luehdorfia chinensis*) inhabits the hilly and plain regions of the lower and middle reaches of the Yangtze River and the Qinling Mountains. Rapid economic development and infrastructure expansion have significantly reduced its habitat, posing a serious threat to the survival of this endemic species.

TARGET

Investigation and conservation of *Luehdorfia chinensis* and its habitat [Implementer: Song Zhishun and Zhang Songkui]. (T-039)



Success category: Local people involvement

Success story:

The Chinese Luehdorfia Butterfly (*L. chinensis*), an endemic species to China and a Class II National Protected Animal, has become a symbol of biodiversity conservation. Found in low hilly regions and plains of the Yangtze River's middle and lower reaches, as well as the Qinling Mountains, this butterfly inhabits densely populated and economically developed areas. Its larvae depend on *Asarum forbesii* and *A. sieboldii*, while adults feed on nectar from species like dandelions (*Taraxacum* spp.) and *Viola philippica* Cav. Once common in cities like Wuhan, Nanjing, and Hangzhou, its population has sharply declined due to habitat loss driven by urbanisation.



REASONS FOR SUCCESS

The success of this conservation effort arose from strong collaboration among government agencies, academic institutions, and the public. Government funding and technical support, combined with scientific research, built a solid foundation for action. Youth participation and extensive media coverage amplified awareness, while integrated research, engagement, and communication effectively advanced conservation of the Chinese Luehdorfia butterfly.

Nanjing has led conservation efforts through the Natural Museum of Chinese Luehdorfia Butterfly (NMLC), the Jiangsu Zoological Society (JZS), and Jiangsu Second Normal University (JSSNU). From 2018 to 2022, they conducted the pioneering "Five-Year Synchronised Survey," the first comprehensive assessment of *L. chinensis*. Involving universities, photographers, enthusiasts, and schoolchildren, it produced the 'Five-Year Synchronised Survey Report of the Nanjing *L. chinensis* (2018-2022)', offering crucial insights into population threats and conservation needs. In 2023, NMLC and JSSNU launched the 'Survey and Conservation Plan for the Chinese Luehdorfia Butterfly and its Habitat in the Lower Yangtze River and Qinling Mountains,' which ran from 2023 to 2026. This ongoing project spans key habitats across multiple provinces, including Anhui, Hubei, Hunan, Jiangsu, Jiangxi, Chongqing, and the Qinling Mountains. In March 2024, a remarkable rediscovery occurred in Changyang, Hubei, where the species was found in its original discovery site after over 130 years. This discovery led to the establishment of the Memorial Hall of *L. chinensis* and the creation of China's first "natural monument" dedicated to the butterfly's type locality, setting a new standard for species conservation in the region.

That same year, the "Chinese Luehdorfia Butterfly Population Recovery and Habitat Restoration Project" began in Nanjing, focusing on host plant cultivation and public education through field trips. The publication of the *Ecological Atlas of L. chinensis* and over 1,000 related events have deepened public engagement. Recognised as one of Jiangsu's representative animals, the Chinese Luehdorfia now serves as a flagship for biodiversity conservation in China.

This comprehensive conservation effort not only aids in the recovery of *L. chinensis* but also demonstrates how research, community involvement, and policy can jointly protect endangered species and their habitats. ■ YUFANG GAO



SUCCESS LEVEL

Successful



Vulnerable Northern River Shark,
(*Glyphis garricki*)
Photo: Grant Johnson

Interviews about human wildlife
interactions with local inhabitants
Photo: Kiran Thapa Magar

Vicuña management by Cooperativa
Agroganadera de Santa Catalina and Comunidad
Aborígen Atu Shapi de Morritos.
Santa Catalina, Jujuy Province, Argentina
Photo: Yanina Arzamendia

Story photo credits

Chinese Luehdorfi Butterfly (*L. chinensis*)
Photo: Songkui Zhang

Schoolchildren in Chinese Luehdorfi
Butterfly survey
Photo: Songkui Zhang

Community songbird monitoring and
protection, Indonesia
Photo: Asian Songbird Trade SG archives

Cacti from genera *Copiapoa* and *Eriosyce*
confiscated in Italy and repatriated to Chile in 2021
Photo: Andrea Cattabriga