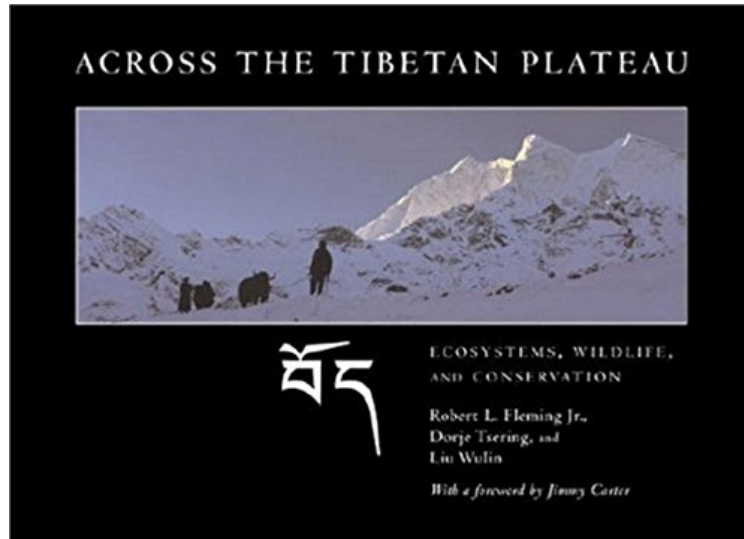



Across the Tibetan Plateau: Ecosystems, Wildlife, and Conservation

Robert L. Fleming Jr., Dorje Tsering, Liu Wulin
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Robert L. Fleming Jr., Dorje Tsering, Liu Wulin : Across the Tibetan Plateau: Ecosystems, Wildlife, and Conservation before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Across the Tibetan Plateau: Ecosystems, Wildlife, and Conservation:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Gorgeous photographs and great information on Tibetan wildlife By Tim F. Martin_Across the Tibetan Plateau_ by Robert L. Fleming Jr., Dorje Tsering, and Liu Wulin is a gorgeous coffee-table book containing excellent photographs, wonderful satellite maps of Tibet, and excellent information on the fauna, flora, climate, and geology of the region. The introductory chapter is very brief, the authors basically making the point that Tibet is often portrayed as a "relentlessly cold plateau of no trees," a land of little other than "windblown yaks and picturesque nomads." They write that it is so much more, a land that includes ecological zones from arctic to subtropic. Chapter one is titled "ferns firs: the wet southeast." This land is often quite isolated and boasts a subtropical climate and at higher elevations, cold-temperate and mountain-tundra zones. Its chief native human inhabitants being the Monba or Loba people (who cultivate barley and hunt and gather forest products with the use of hunting dogs), the area is botanically diverse, its flora includes often huge cinnamon trees (reaching upwards of 60 feet in height) and over 200 species of rhododendron. Its fauna includes cobras, the red ghoral (a small "goat-antelope"), the giant flying squirrel, the takin ("its face a peculiar profile reminiscent of its closest relative, the musk ox"), and several species of pheasant. The second chapter looks at the rain-shadow deserts of south central Tibet, which on satellite maps appear as "light tan terrain" to the north of the "white-mantled Great Himalayan Range." This land, the "historical heart" of Tibet, includes the traditional birthplace of the Tibetan people (according to legend the result of a union between an ogress and a monkey), the capital Lhasa, impressive avifauna (the Tibetan snow cock, golden eagles, and the Himalayan griffon), and the thankfully increasing blue sheep, the quintessential herbivore of the mountainous highlands of central Asia. Chapter three focuses on the "far west," a land that while on maps appears to be dominated by twin lakes of Manasarowar and Rakshas Tal, is still a rain-shadow desert. In this part of Tibet one finds Mount Kailash, the world's most sacred peak, the bar-headed goose (a small but distinctive goose that nests on

the shores of highland lakes throughout Central Asia, it has a physiology such that it can migrate even over the Himalayas), the kiang (or Tibetan wild ass, once quite common), and great herds of domestic yak, vital to the lives of highland pastoralists. Chapter four, "wild yaks turquoise lakes," looked at the north of Tibet, a land of vast, open vistas and many lakes, some freshwater, some alkaline (nearly five hundred lakes of at least one square kilometer in size exist here). Much of the area is technically tundra with permafrost, resulting in widespread boggy wetlands in the summer months (attracting nesting migratory shorebirds). This region is the last stronghold of the wild yak and the highly endangered Tibetan antelope, overhunted to produce shahtoosh, "the world's most expensive hair," woven into "shawls so fine that they can be pulled through a finger-size ring." Other notable animals include brown-headed gulls (which nest in the hundreds on the edges of lakes), the black-necked crane (once thought one of the rarest crane species, now known to number over 10,000), grizzly bears, and wolves (sightings of which are almost always of single animals or pairs, never packs). Chapter five examined eastern Tibet, a land of "rumpled" terrain dissected by many river valleys. There was excellent information and many fine pictures of the area's terrace farming, white-lipped deer, partridges, many varieties of conifer, and the unfortunate indiscriminate logging plaguing the region. The sixth chapter looked at river valleys in Tibet, major "biological highways." Five major Asian rivers rise in the region. This chapter included much discussion of conservation, climate, and many Tibetan bird species (such as the ruddy shelduck, "one of the most characteristic birds of Tibet" and the demoiselle crane, a "small, elegant crane"). Chapter seven looked the topography and seasons of Tibet. In this section there is much discussion of the geology that produced Tibet and the overall climate of the region, particularly as it affects Tibet's flora, fauna, and people. One learns for instance that winter can mean "quite different things in various parts of the land;" some areas, such as in the southeast, may see huge snowfalls while other areas have clear cold winters and in fact if larger than normal snow storms occur can see widespread starvation of livestock and wildlife (one such storm in 1998 led to the death of thousands of domestic animals and extreme hardship for those that depended upon them). There are also areas of immense beauty; for instance much of the sacred Chimpuk Valley is "smothered in rosebushes." The final chapter looked at conservation. The situation seems a hopeful one; in fifteen years Tibet went from less than 1% of its animals and lands protected to by the end of 2003 over 40% of its land area under some form of protection. Though animals in Tibet have suffered in the 19th and 20th centuries from poaching there is a long tradition for the respect of living things. Even today there are many "holy hot spots" where even poachers avoid. The blue-eared pheasant for instance, now restricted entirely to southeastern Tibet, has been heavily hunted for food; in one valley however, they are common and visible, not shy, thanks to a centuries-old tradition of protection. The Changtang Nature Reserve in northern Tibet, created in 1995 (the third largest protected area on the planet after Greenland and Saudi Arabia's Empty Quarter, covering some 115,000 square miles) has been of immense help in preserving the wild yak (which has tripled its numbers) and the Tibetan antelope (the number of poached antelope falling from 5,000 in 1995 to 500 in 2002). There is even a large wetland preserve right on the edge of downtown Lhasa. The authors sound a very hopeful note, showing the great strides in government policies, policing, and the training of the average person in preserving Tibet's diverse fauna and flora.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I wanna goBy Michigan ReviewerGot it @ public library. Most of my books are from there. I liked it. I did not read all of the prose, however. I did look @ all the photos and read all of the captions to those photos. Looks to be a beautiful place. Flora and fauna featured. Some of the culture and population, which is admittedly small. Population, that is. Learned a lot about what does, and does not, flourish at those altitudes. Fun for those of us without a good grounding in Tibetan information. Worth your time.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. CHINESE PROPAGANDA!By Mr. K. J. MorrisCHINESE PROPAGANDA! This book is a fine example of how totally to mislead people about the crimes that the Han have been committing in Tibet since the late 1940s. With lots of pretty pictures it tells of the conservation work conducted in Tibet. It totally fails to explain that the conservation is only required because of the damage already done in Tibet by the Han Chinese invaders. No mention is made of herds of yak machine gunned, butchered and rushed in refrigerated lorries to China by the PLA. No mention either of the hundreds of brothels opened in Lhasa to cater to the needs of the occupying soldiers of the PLA. No mention either of nomads forced to give up their livelihoods because of the damage to Tibet of its native flora and fauna in order to support a massive occupying army. No mention either of the nuclear dumps, or of PLA enterprises taking advantage of slave labour thanks to an ample supply of Tibetan political prisoners. Most of the great Asian rivers rise in the highlands of Tibet. Many of those great rivers have been subject in recent years thanks to severe flooding because of soil erosion as a consequence of damage done to the landscape by the ignorant Han settlers encouraged to settle in Tibet. Nowadays Tibetans are a minority in their own country and it is almost impossible to receive a secondary education in the native Tibetan language. Readers will find no mention made of the international Commission of Jurists' report claiming that the Chinese have committed genocide in Tibet. No mention either of the increasing numbers of desperate Tibetans who feel that they have so little left to them that they set fire to themselves. When I bought this book it was sealed in plastic and it was only when I got it home that I realised that it was a Chinese whitewash. The photographs, some of which are quite nice, generally are not of particularly good quality, nor is the print quality. I was shocked to see the foreword written by former President Carter. With all the information on foreign affairs that is available to every ex president of the United States of America, Carter has no

excuse for not being perfectly aware of what is really going on in Tibet. One can only assume that he was paid rather more than thirty pieces of silver for his contribution to this shabby whitewash.

Remarkable photographs celebrate the wild places and the exquisite animals of the country called the roof of the world. Here is the most comprehensive photography to date of a little-known and seldom-visited land whose area equals western Europe. The beauty and diversity of Tibet is staggering: from Mount Everest to the world's deepest gorge, from tropical jungles to arctic-like tundra, from trees twenty feet in diameter to vast herds and solitary specimens of some of the least-known animals on the planet. Certain photographs, such as those of a newborn Tibetan antelope or the elusive red goral, are among the first ever taken of these subjects. The book brings American, Tibetan, and Chinese scholarship to bear on the natural history of Tibet, and it also describes an extraordinary conservation accomplishment that has gone virtually unnoticed by the outside world. Where else has 40 percent of the land been set aside in nature preserves in twenty years? As a result of this effort, the animals and landscapes shown here will be saved for future generations.

About the Author Robert L. Fleming Jr. is professor of equity and empowerment at Future Generations and a leading Himalayan natural historian. Dorje Tsering is a scholar and the senior leader of the Tibet Autonomous Region Department of Science and Technology. Liu Wulin grew up in Tibet and has been conducting research and fieldwork there for twenty years. Jimmy Carter was the thirty-ninth president of the United States (1977-1981) and was the 2002 recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize. He lives in Plains, Georgia.