

# 1993 International Symposium on Grassland Resources, Huhehot, Peoples Republic of China

**Michael R. Frisina**

During mid-August 1993, grassland managers, research specialists, and scholars from around the world were enroute to Huhehot, capitol of the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, Peoples Republic of China. The purpose of their journey, and of mine, was to attend the International Symposium on Grassland Resources held August 16-18, 1993 in Huhehot.

The conference began on August 16th with 270 delegates representing 15 nations. In addition to China, international delegates represented Japan, Italy, India, Iran, Hungary, Australia, New Zealand, Britain, Canada, South

Africa, Russia, Nepal, Mongolia, and the United States.

There was much stimulating discussion and exchange of information. Presentations described management and research efforts to improve the world's grasslands. The focus was on grasslands degraded as a result of historical land uses such as continuous season-long livestock grazing. Improving native steppes to provide a winter livestock forage source, using animals to spread seed through inclusion in feed supplements, and applying rotational grazing strategies were among tropics discussed. Strategies to meet human needs while maintaining ecological integrity was a common thread tying presentations together. A peer-reviewed conference proceedings is in preparation and will be available in the near future as a reference for grassland managers.

During the conference our Chinese hosts provided tours of the College of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry, the Grassland Research Institute, and local historic cultural sites. Delegates were able to select from several post-conference tours to observe China's grasslands and management efforts first hand. Tour choices included the desert, meadow, and forest steppe grassland types.

Huhehot was a particularly appropriate setting for this international gathering. The city is home to the prestigious Grassland Research Institute and Inner Mongolian College of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry. The Grassland Research Institute is famous throughout China for its work in the field of grassland management. The College of Animal Husbandry educates young Chinese professionals by providing bachelor and masters degree programs in the disciplines of animal husbandry and range management. Over 2,000 students attend this college. These institutions provide essential knowledge for compliance with the Chinese Rangeland Law. The Rangeland Law was enacted in 1985 making proper management of the nation's grasslands a matter of national statute.

Located on the Eurasian steppe, Huhehot (Green City), provided an ideal location for a symposium on grassland resources due to the city's long history of human utilization of grassland resources. The area has been inhabited by nomadic livestock herding cultures for many centuries. China is a world leader in management and utilization of grassland resources by necessity. With the need to maintain food resources for a population of over a billion people, China must intensively manage all agricultural

Author is with the Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Butte, Montana.



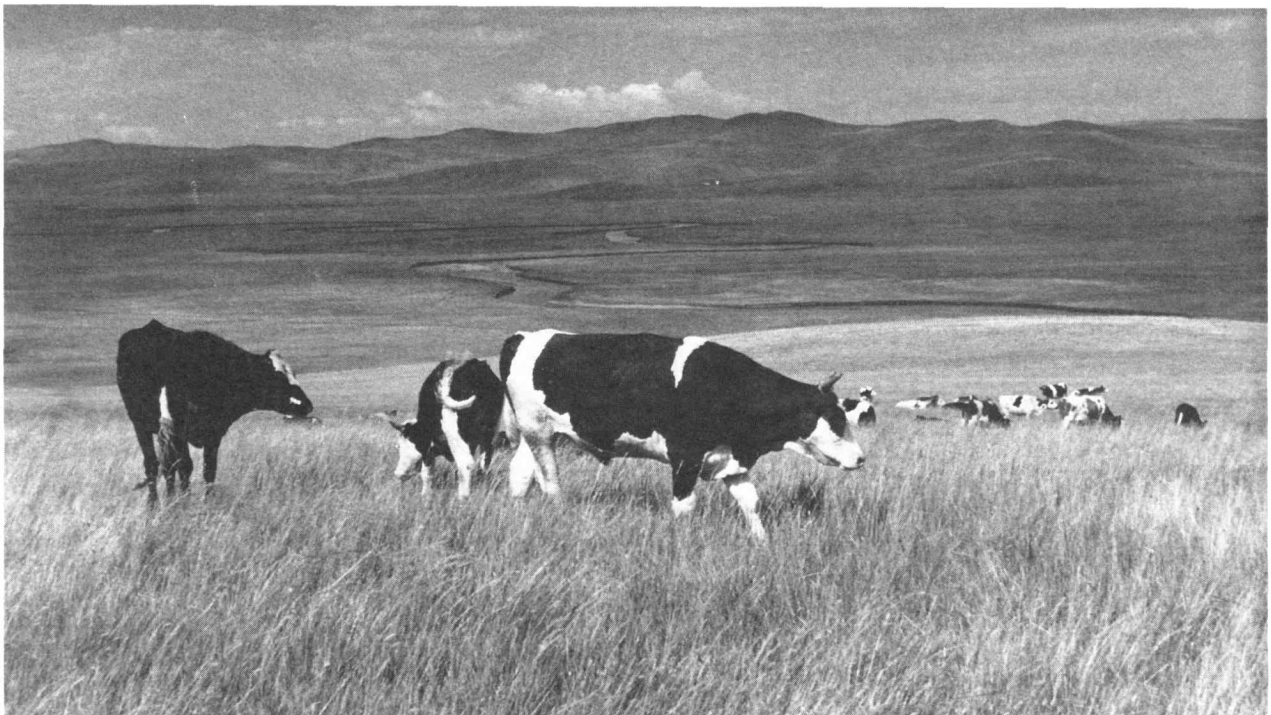
*Huhehot, the green city, capital and center of commerce for the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region.*



*Professor Yun Jin Feng (2nd right) and College Dean Liu Defu (3rd right) hosting a conference tour of the Inner Mongolian College of Agriculture and Animal Husbandry. Author, Michael Frisina back row, left side.*

resources. Similar to Europe, Western America, and other countries, historic demands on China's grasslands have resulted in deterioration due to excessive livestock grazing. In China about 21.25 million acres are negatively impacted. Also as in the west, China's land managers are working with stockmen to employ range management and agricultural practices to improve the productivity and ecological condition of the grasslands.

For me attending this conference offered both personal and professional rewards. . .the opportunity to renew friendships, to make new ones, and to become familiar with rural portions of the Eurasian steppe. The Peoples Republic of China is to be commended for the new openness experienced by the conference attendees and for their efforts to make management of the world's grasslands a cooperative global effort.



*Cattle grazing on the Eurasian steppe.*

**Grassland Research Institute  
of the  
Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences**

Established in 1963, this institution specializes in all phases of grassland scientific research, specifically research into the evaluation, utilization, cultivation and protection of China's grasslands. Research focuses on applied basic research, technological research, and technological development. The research effort and staff of 276 scientists are organized into the following nine divisions:

- Forage Germplasm Resources;
- Forage Breeding;
- Grassland Resources and Remote Sensing Applications;
- Fodder Crops Cultivation;
- Range Management;
- Animal Production;
- Grassland Protection and Mice Control;
- Grassland Machinery; and
- Analytical Testing Research.

In addition to the nine divisions, the Grassland Institute maintains two experimental farms totalling 1,630 acres and a Grassland Information Reference Center. The Institute houses the editorial department for the award winning Chinese periodical "Grasslands of China". In 1992 the Institute was expanded to include a laboratory of grassland ecology, which is open to cooperative research with foreign scientists.



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