

8 arrested for poaching black bears in NE China

Eight people have been arrested for allegedly killing black bears in northeast China's Jilin Province, police said Tuesday.

Using homemade guns and bombs, the gang is believed to have killed at least three black bears since June, said a police officer from the city of Yanbian.

On July 23, police received reports about the sighting of a bear corpse with its paws missing in Xinkai Forest Farm.

Examinations found the bear had been killed by a gunshot to the head around a month earlier.

After a two-month investigation, police arrested seven suspects and another turned himself in earlier this month.

A dozen bear paws and three bear gallbladders were seized.

In traditional Chinese medicine (TCM), bear paws are believed to be very nutritious, while bear gallbladders and bile have been used in TCM treatments to reduce fever, remove toxins and treat liver and eye ailments for thousands of years.

Although black bears are listed as a national second class protected species, poaching is not rare in China.

Last month, a 1.46-million-hectare national park for the protection of Siberian tiger and Amur leopard habitats was inaugurated in Jilin and neighboring Heilongjiang Province, which includes known black bear poaching sites.

The park is aimed at restoring the local ecology which has been damaged by human activity and better protecting wild animals and their habitats.