

## [China strengthens protection of wetlands along Yangtze](#)

China will strengthen protection of wetlands along the Yangtze River economic belt to address pollution and reclamation challenges, said a senior forestry official on Saturday.

The State Forestry Administration will give more support in wetland restoration and construction of national wetland parks to provinces along the belt, said Wang Zhigao, head of the wetland protection and management center under the administration at an ecological forum in Wuhan, capital of Hubei Province.

China has about 53.6 million hectares of wetlands, or 4 percent of the world's total. The area of wetlands along the Yangtze accounts for one fifth of the country's total.

However, shrinking and degradation of wetlands pose a threat to the environment.

Since 2011, the central government has accumulatively invested more than 9 billion yuan (1.4 billion U.S. dollars) in wetland restoration and protection projects.

As a result, the country saw an increase of two million hectares of protected wetlands and 160,000 hectares of restored wetlands.

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## [5-magnitude earthquake jolts Taiwan](#)

A 5-magnitude earthquake hit Nantou of Taiwan at 8:22 p.m. Saturday Beijing Time, according to the China Earthquake Networks Center (CENC).

The epicenter was monitored at 23.68 degrees north latitude and 120.69 degrees east longitude.

The quake struck at a depth of about 20 km.

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# Survey aims to help save finless porpoise in Yangtze

A scientific survey on the Yangtze River to review the status of the endangered finless porpoise was launched in Wuhan, Hubei province, on Friday. Its findings are expected to be released in March.

Financed by World Wildlife Fund and local foundations in the province, the survey is the third to be undertaken by the Ministry of Agriculture since 2006. It is being led by the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Hydrobiology.

"Allowing for the decline in porpoise's population and distribution, the survey can show variations more accurately if carried out every five to six years," said Hao Yujiang, a researcher at the institute who is in charge of the work.

The survey will cover waters along the middle and lower stretches of the Yangtze and its two connecting lakes – Poyang and Dongting.

"We will calculate population and distribution of the finless porpoise in the survey and evaluate the environment in which they live. Information we gather will be used to help the government determine key protection areas and take targeted protection measures."

The 3,400-kilometer round trip will last about 40 days, with 32 members and volunteers from research institutes and NGOs involved.

Surveys along the river will conclude on Dec 20, while work at Poyang and Dongting lakes will start on Dec 25 and finish on Jan 10, said Wang Ding, another hydrobiology researcher.

Methods used in the survey include visual observation, acoustic and underwater noise detection and references to the surveys in 2006 and 2012, Wang said, adding that water samples, sediment and underwater noise data will be collected every 50 kilometers.

Team leader Hao said that drones will be used for the first time in the survey to monitor the porpoises and their habitat.

"Visual observation is a recognized method used in wildlife observation," Hao said. "We have seven members observing the porpoises on each of our two ships. Visual fatigue is an inevitable element that will affect the survey results. Drones, however, will help us to correct the results."

The population of the finless porpoise has seen a sharp decline in the past six years – 13.7 percent. The 2012 survey found 1,045 porpoises in the river, about half the number researchers calculated in 2006, Hao said.

Water pollution, environmental degradation and an inefficient food chain –

the result of illegal and unregulated fishing activities – are thought to be the reason for the dramatic decline of the species.

Li Yanliang, chairman of National Aquatic Wildlife Conservation Association, said: “About 10 years ago, the Baiji dolphin was declared functionally extinct. Now the population of finless porpoise is nearly half that of the panda. Protecting the porpoises is a pressing task for us.”

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## [Injured snow leopard recovers in NW China](#)



The snow leopard was unable to move with injuries to both legs. People brought the animal to a nearby temple for treatment on Oct. 16. (Photo provided to China News Service)

An injured snow leopard found 25 days ago in northwest China's Qinghai Province has now recovered, local authorities said Saturday.

The animal was spotted on October 16 by a herdsman in Nangqian County of Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture. It was unable to move with injuries to its legs, according to the herdsman.

The snow leopard was taken to a nearby monastery to be cared for. It was diagnosed two days later with lumbar damage after experts from Beijing Forestry University arrived in the prefecture.

The snow leopard was then taken to the provincial wildlife protection and breeding center in Xining, capital of Qinghai.

The female snow leopard is less than four years old and could not stand on her own on October 28, said Qi Xinzhang, deputy director of the wildlife protection center.

“After treatment, she could stand on her own on November 3, and we are expecting to release her to the wild soon when we believe she is ready, said Qi.

Snow leopards are a Class A protected animal in China. They live in the Himalayas in central and south Asia at an altitude of 2,500 to 4,500 meters. They have been recorded in China’s provinces of Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan and Yunnan, and autonomous regions of Tibet and Xinjiang.

The animal has rarely been seen in the wild this century due to loss of habitat and poaching.

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## [Migrants shrink by 1.7 million](#)



Thousands of migrant workers in China’s southern Guangdong province start their journey back home on motorcycles on January 13, 2017, the first day of this year’s Spring Festival travel rush. [File photo/ChinaNews.com]

China’s population of migrant workers saw a decline for the second consecutive year in 2016 – to 245 million – according to a report released by the National Health and Family Planning Commission on Friday.

Last year, China’s migrating population decreased by 1.7 million from 2015,

the report said. Before 2015, the group had been growing, from 230 million in 2011 to a peak of 253 million in 2014, the report said.

Despite the shrinkage, the migrant population still accounts for a big share of China's total, and the number will remain at a high level over the long term, it said.

The total population of the Chinese mainland exceeded 1.38 billion as of the end of last year, an increase of more than 8 million over the previous year, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

Over the past six years, the portion of all migrants who moved across provinces declined from nearly 70 percent in 2011 to less than 64 percent last year, while the percentage of those migrating to different cities within the same province rose from about 25 percent in 2011 to more than 27 percent last year, the report said.

Meanwhile, average age of migrants rose from 27.3 years to 29.8 years during the same period. The monthly income of migrant workers increased by 15 percent annually, on average, between 2014 and last year, the report said.

The drop in numbers over the past two years is largely the result of major policies issued by the governments to encourage migrants to settle down in the cities where they work, said Wang Qian, chief supervisor over the migrating population at the commission.

Some cities have set limits on total population in recent years, which led to a decrease in migrants, he said.

In Beijing, the total number of migrants declined by more than 150,000 last year from 2015, according to a report released by Beijing University of Technology in September.

Despite the drop in the migrating population over the past two years, one trend has not changed, Wang said: Migrants tend to flow to large city clusters along China's coasts, major rivers and railways. And they tend to take the whole family.

"Increasing whole-family migration will place more demand on public services such as education and healthcare," he said. "We will take this into consideration in providing healthcare and family planning services."