

China steps up protection campaign ahead of World Rhino Day

China has been making tremendous efforts in cracking down on international rhinoceros poaching and rhino horn smuggling, ahead of World Rhino Day Friday.

“Ivory and Rhino horn products dating from any historical period should be banned from public trade and auctions,” said Ma Weidu, a renowned antique collector in China, who endorsed WildAid’s latest promotional campaign on rhino protection.

“China’s top-down efforts to crack down on rhino horn poaching and smuggling are admirable and effective in dimming the illegal trade,” said Steve Blake, chief representative of WildAid, an international wildlife conservation agency, in Beijing.

Rhinos around the world are endangered. Rhino populations have plummeted 95 percent in the last 40 years. In addition to demand for rhino horn for use in medicine, there is also significant demand for collectibles carved from rhino horns.

In celebration of the seventh World Rhino Day, WildAid, National Geographic’s Traveler magazine and the African Wildlife Foundation (AWF) launched a promotional video featuring Ma Weidu.

“Collectibles rooted in killing are valueless,” Ma says in the video.

Since 2012, China has placed the building of a more ecologically focused society among its development priorities, with protection of fauna and flora a crucial element, according to Blake.

From 2013 to 2016, China organized and led worldwide cooperation against rhinoceros horn smuggling, alongside international law enforcement agency, wildlife charities and various authorities worldwide.

“With more stringent legislation and law enforcement, the world’s black market prices for rhinoceros horn are about one-third of what they once were,” Peter Knights, founder and CEO of WildAid, told Xinhua last month.

All sales in rhino horn have been illegal in China since 1993, and rhino horn has been removed from the Traditional Chinese Medicine handbook. Since 2011 all rhino horn items have been banned from auction house sales as well.

“China, from its authorities to the public, has been playing an important part in eradicating the brutal yet complex rhinoceros horn trade,” Blake said.

Ma also called on major international auction houses to put an end to all forms of rhino horn sales, including antiques.

“Despite the traditional appreciation of such crafts, rhino horn pieces are rarely sold at extremely high prices in China,” Ma said.

Ma pointed out that a number of international auction houses had scandalous sales records of rhino horn, which sent out the wrong message.

“If we must choose between protecting wildlife or cultural collectibles, wildlife is far more important,” he told Xinhua.

AWF Trustee Gordon Cheng welcomed the campaign and called for more global efforts to stop the trade in rhino horn.

“Today marks a new milestone for our Rhino Protection Initiative... We hope our program can help to convey the right messages for many existing collectors and users, and most importantly for the younger generation in Asia and around the world,” Cheng said.

On Friday, National Geographic’s Traveler magazine in Beijing launched its “Travel for Earth” program, focusing on ecotourism and experiences to see the surviving rhinos.

“Rhino-based tourism is hugely important for protecting rhinos,” said Yu Hui of Traveler magazine. “As one of the flagship wildlife species in Africa, tourism to view them generates revenue for both local communities and conservation efforts.”

Ma Weidu’s new rhino campaign will appear on television, online, at airports and outdoor media across China in October 2017.

[Exposed combustible ice found in South China Sea](#)

Chinese scientists have discovered two sites of gas hydrates, or combustible ice, which are exposed on the sea floor in the South China Sea.

The Chinese Academy of Sciences institute of oceanology said on Friday that the discoveries were made during a month-long expedition in the western Pacific Ocean undertaken by the research vessel Kexue.

The two sites are at about a depth of 1,100 meters. It is the first time exposed combustible ice has been discovered in sea areas under the jurisdiction of China, according to the institute.

Combustible ice usually exists in deep sea sediment or tundra areas which have high pressure and low temperature necessary for its stability. It is rare to see the substance exposed on sea floor.

China declared its first success in collecting samples of combustible ice in the South China Sea on May 18 after discovering the substance there in 2007.

Combustible ice can be ignited like solid ethanol. One cubic meter is equal to 164 cubic meters of regular natural gas.

Chinese professor taps online learning trend

A professor from Peking University has hit the headlines after raking in millions yuan through his online economics classes, reports Xinhua News Agency.

49-year-old Xue Zhaofeng, a professor at the National School of Development at Peking University, has so far garnered more than 3.7 million yuan (around USD 560 thousand) in revenue thanks to his classes, which he launched at the beginning of the year.

They can be found on the mobile app Dedao, which aggregates information services, provides paid subscription products online on subjects including business, science, books and technology.

Each class lasts for ten minutes. Subscribers need to pay 199 yuan (USD 30) per year, around 0.5 yuan per day.

They cover a wide range of topics, from common sense economics to major theories.

After only six months, he's amassed over 170,000 subscribers. That achievement is itself a lesson in economics.

Xue's story reflects the huge changes taking place in China. The knowledge economy is booming in the Chinese market. Many internet companies provide paid content services, including interpretation on new books, English education, and ways of raising a child.

For instance, Beijing-based internet company Douban launched a paid content section called Douban Time in March. Through this program, 17 contemporary poets were invited to give talks on poetry on its mobile app.

A platform called Fenda (which means one minute answer), allows people to earn money by answering questions via WeChat.

The knowledge economy is also reflected in the news industry. China Daily, an English-language newspaper published in China, now provides paid services for both its print and E-paper version. Subscription is also needed for some of the articles in the English edition of Caixin, a Beijing-based media website

providing financial and business news and information.

More and more Chinese people are also becoming more willing to pay for internet-based information.

It's been estimated that nearly 100 million people are ready to pay for the content available online.

[NW China province asks public to name panda cubs](#)

Northwest China's Shaanxi Province launched a naming campaign Thursday, asking fans to name its three newest panda cubs.

The public can suggest names via phone, email or instant messaging platform QQ, before October 20, according to Dang Shuangren, deputy head of the provincial forestry department.

Dang said the final names would be announced by the end of October.

The three pandas include twin cubs given birth by a panda named Ai Bang on June 12 at the breeding and research center for endangered wild animals in Zhouzhi county, Shaanxi. Another baby panda was delivered by a panda called Zhu Zhu on August 21.

A total of four panda cubs, including the three babies who are yet to be named, met the public for the first time on Thursday.

Since 2003, 16 panda cubs have been born at the base, bringing its number of captive-bred giant pandas to 23.

The number of wild pandas in Shaanxi has grown to 345. Researchers are conducting wilderness training programs to help restore the wild population.

Giant pandas are one of the world's most endangered species and live mainly in the mountains of northern Sichuan Province as well as southern Gansu and Shaanxi provinces.

['Orange Bag' stirs controversy](#)

The controversial "Orange Schoolbag" program launched for hearing-impaired

children has prompted heated discussions among the public, reports china.com.



Children with orange schoolbags crossing the road. [Photo: adfc.org.cn]

What is an orange schoolbag?

Chinese singer and actor Chen Xiaochun recently posted on his Weibo account to remind drivers of children walking with special kinds of orange schoolbags, which are actually a sign that these children are hearing-impaired.

It was then reported by chinanews.com that the Audiology Development Foundation of China (ADFC) launched a public welfare campaign called “Orange Schoolbag” on “World Ear Day”, March 3, 2016, to give out special orange schoolbags to hearing-impaired children. The campaign calls on drivers and pedestrians to slow down and yield right of way to hearing-impaired children.

Opposition: It’s discrimination by labeling kids with disability.

“Orange schoolbags place a label of ‘hearing impairment’ on these children and make them feel like they are being treated differently,” said Fu Yan, secretary of the Chengdu Cloud for Public Good Development Association. “It might also place a psychological burden on these children and even result in psychological problems.”

“This is the stupidest program of the year,” said one outspoken parent. “It makes hearing-impaired children grow up feeling sorry for themselves.”

Some people even felt the scheme might actually increase the risks for hearing-impaired children instead of protecting them.

“Orange schoolbags publicize the identity of the hearing-impaired children, which might give dangerous people the opportunity to assault, abduct or traffic these children,” said Lv Xinyan, director of a charitable organization in Sichuan province.

Some others took a neutral point view that hearing-impaired children are able

to make their own decisions whether to wear orange schoolbags.

Initiator: Disregarding is real discrimination.

“With traffic the way it is, we need to call upon as many people as possible to pay attention to the objective needs of this special group,” said Ye Fei, assistant to the secretary of the ADFC. “The real discrimination is if we just disregard their needs.”

Statistics show that around 25,000 school kids get injured or die in traffic accidents in China every year. Being less aware of vehicles, hearing-impaired children are more vulnerable.

“Our purpose is to alert the public that these children are different from us,” a staff member from the ADFC said. “Only by realizing the difference, can we better understand and help them.”

It’s estimated that 4.6-million children under the age of 15 suffer from some form of hearing impairment in China.

It is reported that the ADFC has given out 10,000 orange schoolbags to hearing-impaired children so far. Due to the large demand, however, many children are still waiting to get one.

“Each orange schoolbag contains art supplies,” added Ye Fei. “Hearing-impaired children often possess an aptitude for art, which should be further developed.”