

Efforts lead to increase in wildlife populations

By **PALDEN NYIMA**

Wild animals such as Tibetan antelopes and wild Tibetan donkeys are no longer hard to find in Tibet, thanks to recent efforts in local protection.

Tenzin Gyime is a forestry patroller in Gyirong county, which was part of the Qomolangma National Nature Reserve and is home to rare species such as snow leopards, langur monkeys and gorals — animals on the State's first and second-level lists for protection.

Tenzin Gyime said protecting animals is part of a Tibetan tradition.

"When drivers see langur monkeys or other animals crossing the roads, they would stop right away to make way for them," the patroller said. "Protecting wildlife is a common practice in my village. Even when wild animals spoil crops, villagers never take revenge."

In recent years, the local governments have been stressing the work of wildlife protection.

The regional government of Tibet invested more than 11.7 billion yuan (\$1.67 billion) in improving local ecological environment in 2019.

Thanks to the efforts, the number of wild animals has continued to grow in recent years.

According to statistics released by the Tibet Wildlife Conservation Society, the population of Tibetan antelopes increased from 50,000-70,000 in the 1990s to more than 200,000 at present and the number of wild Tibetan donkeys increased from 50,000 to about 90,000.

The number of endangered black-necked cranes grew to 8,000, up from 1,000-3,000 in the 1990s, while the number of wild yaks rose to about 10,000.

The population of snow leopards and blue sheep have also increased significantly.

The region's development of reserves to protect animals dates back to 1974. Since then, Tibet has established nature reserves for various rare species including Tibetan antelopes, black-necked cranes, wild yaks, takins, wild

Tibetan donkeys and white-lipped deer.

Zhang Tianhua, head of the Tibet Department of Ecology and Environment, said the number of the region's nature reserves hit 47 in 2019. Total area of the reserves surpassed 410,000 square kilometers.

As China's largest, the Changthang National Nature Reserve covers an area of more than 290,000 sq km, including seven counties in Nagchu city and Ngari prefecture.

The reserve has hired 780 rural residents as wildlife patrollers.

Tashi Sonam from Nyima county is one of the patrollers.

Born in a nomadic family, Tashi Sonam said he grew up in an environment with wild animals around and has liked being around animals since he was a child.

He was trained to learn more about animal protection years back. Now he and his colleagues can skillfully use equipment such as GPS, telescopes, satellite phone and cameras.

"In our monitoring zone, we can film and record what we see and send reports regularly," the 25-year-old said.

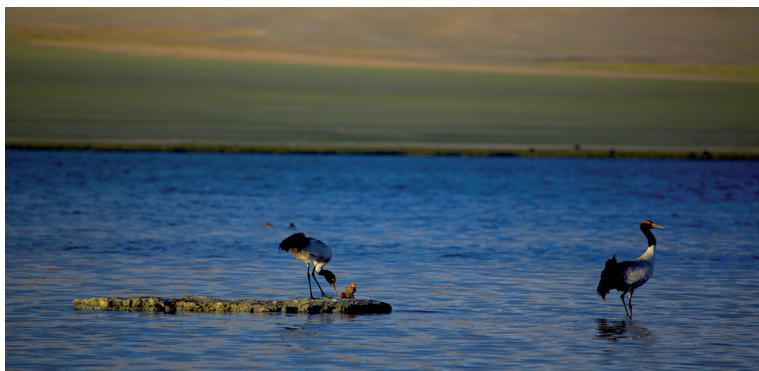
Tashi Dorje, an official at the Tibet Department of Forestry and Grassland, said the wildlife protection law is an effective means in animal protection as it offers a sound legislative basis for punishing wildlife-related infringements.

On Oct 6, 2017, a case of off-road vehicles chasing Tibetan antelopes became a hot topic on social media.

After investigations by forestry police, seven people were charged with illegally approaching wild animals and were fined more than 100,000 yuan.

In an illegal poaching case announced in May in Chamdo, three criminals were sentenced to 11 to 12 months in prison and fined 60,000 yuan.

The law also stipulates the government's compensation for incidents when residents' properties were damaged by wild animals. To date, 640 million yuan has been paid to residents in such compensation.



Black-necked cranes are spotted in one of the nature reserves in Tibet. The number of the endangered species grew to 8,000 at present, from 1,000-3,000 in the 1990s. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A result of the local people and governments' efforts in environmental protection, the Tibet autonomous region remains to be one of the most pristine lands in the world. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Pollution curbed as residents take action

94,890 acres of land in region have been turned into forest

By **PALDEN NYIMA**

Yungdrung Tsering, a herder in Dengchen county in Chamdo city, the Tibet autonomous region, is pleased with the government's efforts in pollution control in his home village.

Thanks to the efforts, he said his fellow villagers now enjoy a better living environment that is very different from a few years ago.

"Garbage was found everywhere on the hills and in the rivers, and it caused hidden danger to our health," Yungdrung Tsering said. "There were incidents of animals dying after eating plastic bags in my village several years ago," he added.

Yungdrung Tsering said the situation has improved thanks to government efforts in recent years, as pollution comes more under control.

Dengchen county has implemented a series of measures to deal with pollution.

The government has made heavy investments in this field, locals are hired for ecological patrols and companies are commissioned for waste disposal.

Collecting the precious caterpillar fungus is a source of revenue for residents in Dengchen. And littering is a problem during the fungus-collecting season.

The county started a pollution prevention campaign in March, dispatching garbage bags, installing dustbins and educating people on environmental protection.

"Thanks to the efforts, the environment in rural areas has been improving, with fewer animals dying of eating garbage,"



Volunteers collect garbage on a hill in Dengchen county. PALDEN NYIMA / CHINA DAILY

Yungdrung Tsering said. "Residents' awareness of environmental protection has also improved."

Courses on environmental protection are also taught in schools. In the Yiri Township Primary School of Chamdo's Riwoche county, environmental protection was part of the school's curriculum.

Sonam Tsering, a student of the school, said caring for nature is as important as caring for his own home.

"Environmental protection requires everybody's collective effort and we should develop awareness from a very young age," Sonam Tsering said.

Known as the "eastern gate of the Tibet autonomous region", Chamdo stands at the upper streams of Asia's big rivers such as the Yangtze, Lancang (Mekong) and Nujiang (Salween).

The city was accredited a national model city for ecological environment by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment in 2019.

Environmental protection measures of Chamdo city include pollution control, water source protection, reforestation and control of desertification.

According to the Chamdo bureau of ecology and environment, 11,800 people have participated in the city's reforestation projects in the past four years, turning 94,890 acres of land into forests.

The city has spent more than 190 million yuan (\$38.89 million) in the development of three regional-level nature reserves.

Chamdo has carried out a campaign to clean and improve the area's living environment since 2016.

By the end of 2019, 6,170 dustbins had been installed and 64 waste disposal facilities were built in rural areas. In addition, 1,194 trucks were purchased for garbage transportation in rural areas.

Participants in environmental protection include officials, residents, monks, nuns, students and volunteers.