



IFAW *in* ACTION

International Fund for Animal Welfare

Saving Moon Bears from Lives of Torture

The endangered Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*) is often called the “moon bear” because of the white crescent of fur on its chest.



© IFAW/Richard Sobol

Approximately 7,600 Asiatic black bears, or “moon bears,” are held in appalling conditions on more than 400 bear bile “farms” across China. Most captive bears are kept in small cages that allow little movement. Many suffer from an open abdominal wound caused by a crude catheter implanted to drain gall bladder bile. The bile is used in traditional medicines (TM), tonics, teas, and even shampoos.

Exposing Cruelties

A 1993 IFAW exposé revealed that more than 10,000 bears were incarcerated on China’s bear bile farms. In response, we mounted a global campaign to end this cruel practice. Largely because of IFAW’s intervention, Chinese authorities closed the worst farms, stopped issuing new bear farm licences, and began accepting suggestions for improving conditions for captive bears. IFAW rescued nine lucky animals from one farm and built a sanctuary for them in southern China.

We continue to work with Chinese government agencies and others to provide humane treatment for captive bears, conserve wild bear populations, promote animal welfare legislation, reduce the market for bear bile products, and eventually eliminate the exploitation of this endangered species.

Panyu Bear Sanctuary: Safety and Education

Today, six of the bears we rescued live at IFAW’s Panyu Bear Sanctuary. They spend their days frolicking in pools, sleeping, and exploring two acres of woodland, free from fear, pain and hunger.

Each bear has individual characteristics. Chu Chu likes to play. Donny, the oldest, is nearly blind after years of confinement. Digger, one of only two females at the sanctuary, is recognisable by the thick ruff around her neck. The shyest is Elizabeth, who generally keeps to herself. Frisky Hong, one of the largest bears, enjoys wrestling. Gentle, affectionate Xie Sheung is the most comfortable in the presence of humans.

The sanctuary not only provides for these bears, it offers opportunities for non-invasive research, important for a species as poorly documented as Asiatic black bears. For example, IFAW managers,

researchers and veterinarians are developing a health-monitoring programme using biological and behavioural indicators.

In addition, our behavioural management programme makes the Panyu Bear Sanctuary a “model of excellence” for the care of captive animals in Asia.

IFAW is establishing an education centre at the sanctuary to house exhibits on bear farming and wild bear conservation, as well as a walk-through “*Traditional Medicine Garden*” to highlight herbal TM ingredients. Animal welfare awareness programmes for schoolchildren and the general public are also planned.

Promoting Herbal Alternatives

The growing global market in traditional medicines—legal and illegal—is devastating bears and many other species. That’s why IFAW promotes consumer conservation awareness and encourages TM practitioners to employ herbal alternatives.

We’ve collaborated with Chinese CITES authorities, and TM practitioners and traders in several nations, on public education campaigns about the links between TM products and the illegal trade in endangered species.

IFAW and the UK’s Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) funded a three-year study by Middlesex University researchers to identify alternatives to bear bile, tiger bone and rhino horn. We also helped the UK-based Chinese Medicine Association of Suppliers and the China Chamber of Commerce of Medicines and Health Products Importers and Exporters create a TM certification system, known as the “*Green Label*” in China and the “*Kitemark Scheme*” in the UK.

We’ve partnered with the US Fish and Wildlife Service, TM schools, herbal industry associations and others in the United States

to reduce the use of products containing derivatives of endangered species and to establish voluntary systems to ensure product quality and wildlife protection. IFAW is also contributing to a curriculum to educate TM students and professionals about relevant conservation, biodiversity, and ethical issues.

KEY FACTS

- Bear farming began in China and North Korea in the early 1980s to supplement supplies of bile once harvested from wild bears killed for their gall bladders.
- There are effective alternatives to bear bile and other animal-based TM preparations.
- The Asiatic black bear (*Ursus thibetanus*) is listed on Appendix I of the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which bans international trade. They have only Class II protection under China’s Wildlife Protection Law, which allows their bile to be sold domestically. This dichotomy makes law enforcement difficult.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

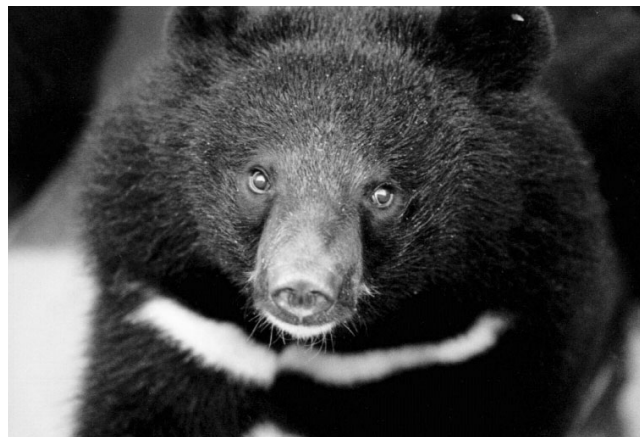
- Don’t buy products containing bear bile; use non-endangered plant-based alternatives.
 - Support only ethical TM practitioners and vendors who do not use ingredients made from endangered animals and plants.
 - Write a letter in support of IFAW’s efforts to end bear bile farming and promote alternatives to the use of bear bile. Send your letter to: IFAW China, Room 705, Golden Tower, No.1 Xibahe South Road, Chaoyang District, Beijing 100028, P.R.C
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To learn more about our efforts to save moon bears, and other animals around the world, visit our Web site at www.ifaw.org.



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You can help protect wild bears and eliminate bear bile farming by not buying products that contain bear bile.



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Rescued bears at IFAW’s Panyu Bear Sanctuary build dens to sleep in, a sign their natural instincts were not lost during their years of captivity.

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