

More Rare Than the Panda

Two wildlife animals in Ningbo added to national first-level protection list

The newly amended National List of Protected Wild Animals (hereinafter referred to as The List) was jointly promulgated by the National Forestry and Grassland Administration and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs of the PRC in February 2021. The Chinese Crested Tern, a critically endangered bird, and the Chinhai Spiny Newt, a species of salamander unique to the Beilun District (east of Ningbo), have been ranked as national first-level protected wild animals in the same section as the giant panda, China's national treasure.

Chinhai Spiny Newt



Photo of a Chinhai spiny newt.

In 1932, Mangven L.Y. Chang, a Chinese zoologist, discov-

ered a new species of salamander, which was later renamed Chinhai Spiny Newt, in Beilun District of Ningbo (formerly known as Zhenhai county of Zhejiang). Approved by the State Council, it was added to the list in January 1989 as a second-level protected wild animal. In 1996, the Ningbo Municipal Bureau of Forestry teamed up with the People's Government of Beilun District to carry out conservation work for this endangered species, establishing the Chinhai Spiny Newt Sanctuary in the Ruiyan Forestry Area of Beilun. Later, backed by the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, the area of the reserve expanded sixty-fold, from the initial 200 square metres to the current 12,000.

"The Chinhai Spiny Newt falls in the amphibian genus of *Acanthostega* characterized by the presence of a tail in both larvae and adults. It can only be found in the Ruiyan Forestry Area of Beilun. It's rare, no more than 330, and greatly endangered," said an official from the Ningbo Natural Resources and Plan-

ning Bureau (Beilun Branch). The Chinhai Spiny Newt is also the prototype for "Yuan Yuan", mascot of the Chinese women's national volleyball team in Beilun Station.

Chinese Crested Tern

The other wildlife animal, apart from the Chinhai Spiny Newt, being upgraded to the first-level protection is the Chinese Crested Tern, a critically endangered bird known as "the Bird of Myth" that nests on the Jiushan Islands in Xiangshan County.



Photo of a Chinese Crested Tern.

The Chinese Crested Tern is categorized as Critically Endangered (CR) on the IUCN Red List, with a very small population (less

than 150) worldwide. A handful of islands of Xiangshan County and Zhoushan Islands are the exclusive breeding sites of the bird. In 2013, the population recovery work of the Chinese Crested Tern kicked off in Zhejiang province, attracting an annual average of 97 adult birds and breeding nearly 30 juveniles during the past two years.

National first-level protected wild animals are mostly endangered species, some of which are on the verge of extinction, and their population is much smaller than that of the second-level. Hence, sentencing is more legally stringent for offences such as poaching, illegal smuggling and illegal trafficking of national first-level protected wild animals. And hunting them for scientific research or breeding and domestication requires approval from the competent Wildlife Protection Department under the State Council.

Source: Ningbo Release (Official Weibo account held by Information Office, The People's Government of Ningbo Municipality)



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宁波大学 学生

