



CALL OF THE WILD: The World Wildlife Fund and other environmental organisations will launch a campaign to double the number of tigers in the wild by 2022 on Sunday, the start of the traditional Chinese lunar year of the tiger REUTERS

# ASIAN AFFLUENCE IMPERILS WORLD TIGER POPULATION

*Increased spend on tiger products as a symbol of status by the nouveau riche is putting pressure on the big cat*

REUTERS  
Washington

**D**emand by a newly rich Asian population for such goods as tiger bone tonic wine and tigers' skin, meat and teeth is putting pressure on these endangered creatures worldwide, wildlife advocates report.

Because of this increased Asian demand for tiger products, tiger farms in Asia are breeding the animals for their body parts, even though there is a ban on this trade in Asia, said Crawford Allan, director of TRAFFIC-North America, which monitors such illicit commerce in animal products.

"Some of the spending of (new Asian) wealth is on symbols of status and traditional products that were previously out of reach, and some of those include endangered

species like the tiger," Allan said in an online briefing.

"Tiger bone tonic wine has become a fashionable cocktail to serve among these *nouveaux riches*, particularly in countries like China," he said.

The United States is also part of the problem, Allan and other conservation leaders said in the briefing, because the US captive tiger population of 5,000 animals is larger than the estimated 3,200 wild tigers in the world.

Many US tigers are bred for entertainment purposes or for private collections, rather than zoos. However, while a small tiger cub may be appealing, even a six-month-old tiger is too much for most private owners to handle and hundreds are turned over to sanctuaries.

What happens to them then is hard to discern because of an irregular patchwork of laws and regulations, the environmentalists said, and some may end

up as part of the illegal trade in tiger parts.

To combat this trade and the poaching and deforestation that are cutting into the number of wild tigers around the globe, the World Wildlife Fund and other environmental organisations launched a campaign to double the number of tigers in the wild by 2022.

The campaign begins formally on Sunday, the start of the traditional Chinese lunar year of the tiger. The goal is to have twice as many wild tigers by the next tiger year in twelve years.

The environmental advocates plan to press their case at a series of international meetings this year, starting with a meeting of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species in March in Doha, Qatar, and continuing through a September gathering specifically on tigers in Vladivostok.

For the last 12 years, experts

in traditional Chinese medicine have been campaigning against the use of tiger parts, said Lixin Huang, president of the American College of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

"Traditional Chinese medicine does not need tiger bones to treat patients or to save lives," Huang said. "Tigers originally came from China, but China does not have many wild tigers left, only about 50."

Saving tigers means saving their disparate environments around Asia, which can also mean saving the human communities that depend on the same environments, said Sybille Klenzendorf, director of WWF-US Species Conservation Program.

Demand in Europe for products made from palm oil, such as lipstick, ice cream, bio-fuels and detergents, helps drive the destruction of tiger habitat in this region, the conservationists said.