

# China defends record on tiger protection

February 26 2013

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Siberian tigers in a zoo in Nanjing, east China's Jiangsu province, February 19, 2013. China is allowing the sale of captive-bred tiger skins and body parts despite signing up to a UN agreement which calls for such trade to be banned, a London-based environmental lobby group has claimed.

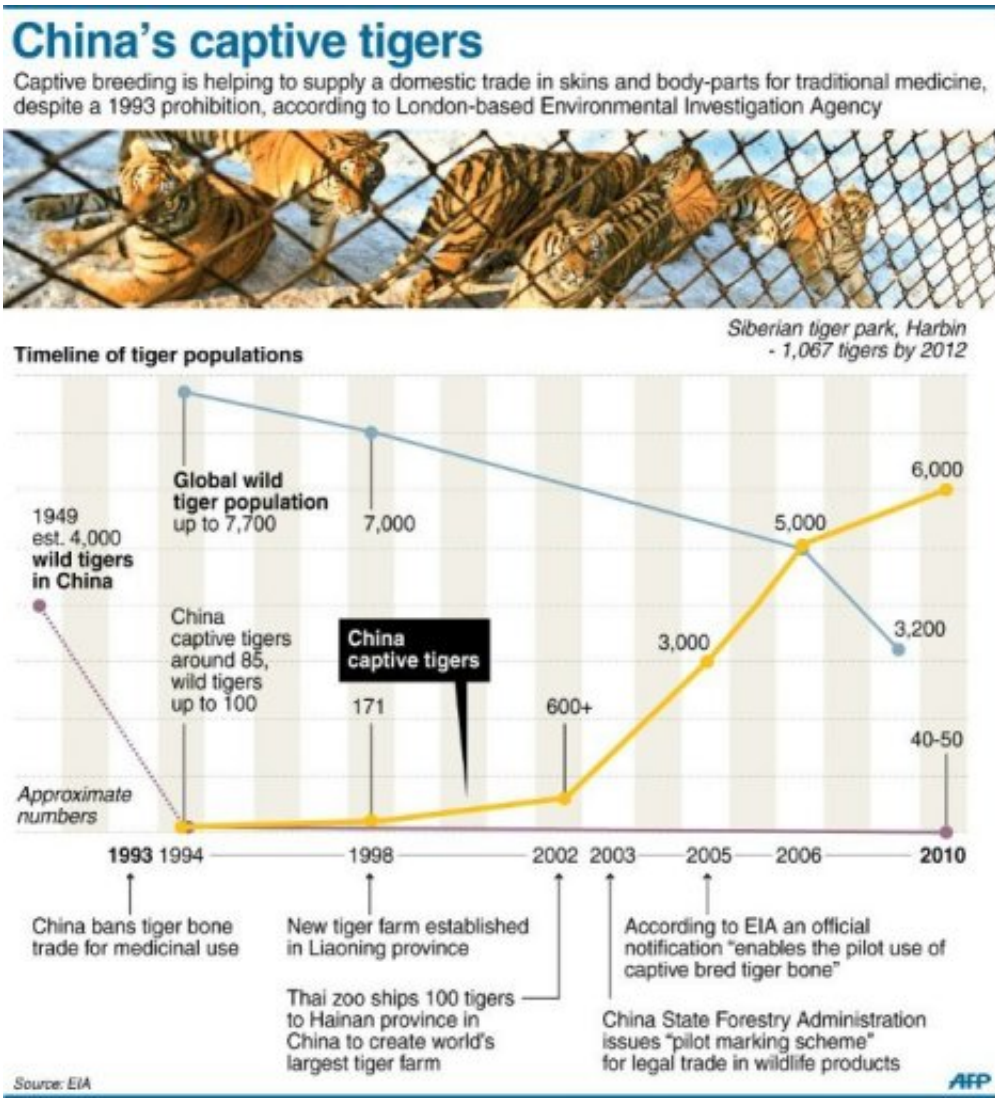
China defended its record on protecting endangered species Tuesday after an environmental group accused it of allowing the sale of captive-bred tiger skins and body parts.

The London-based NGO The Environmental Investigation Agency said

in a report Tuesday that China had a legalised domestic trade in captive-bred tiger products which stimulated the poaching of wild cats.

In Beijing a foreign ministry spokeswoman insisted China had enacted laws and taken other steps to protect endangered species.

"The Chinese government attaches great importance to the protection of endangered wildlife, including tigers," Hua Chunying told a news conference.



Graphic on captive-bred tigers in China. There are around 5,000 captive tigers in China, 1,500 more than in the wild, according to EIA figures.

The Ministry of Public Security, which is responsible for law enforcement, was not immediately available to comment on the report.

The EIA presented evidence that suggests traders are using "secret" government notifications to legitimise the manufacture of "tonic" wines made using captive-bred tiger bones, contravening a 1993 Chinese State Council order.

China is a signatory to the UN Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) which forbids international commercial trade in tiger parts and derivatives.

The accord also calls for domestic trade prohibitions, the consolidation and destruction of stockpiles of tiger parts and products and assurances that tigers are not bred for trade in their parts and derivatives.

Debbie Banks, the head of EIA's Tiger Campaign, said: "The stark contradiction between China's international posture supporting efforts to save the wild tiger and its inward-facing domestic policies which stimulate demand and ultimately drive the poaching of wild tigers represents one of the biggest cons ever perpetrated in the history of tiger conservation.

"Pro-tiger trade policies are championed by only a handful of officials in a couple of government departments and it behooves China to vigorously address and terminate this intolerable disconnect between words and deeds which so undermines international efforts to save the tiger."

There are around 5,000 captive tigers in China, 1,500 more than in the wild, according to EIA figures.

"The international community should show support for this national movement calling for an end to policies which stimulate demand, and China must make good on its pledges to the international community and stop cynically stimulating and aiding a trade it has vowed to end," added Banks.

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Citation: China defends record on tiger protection (2013, February 26) retrieved 11 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-02-china-flouting-tiger-accord.html>

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