



环保材料 -> 《通鉴》 -> 英文通鉴 -> 2006 Spring

WANG YONGCHEN ONLINE: ENVIRONMENTALIST WITH A DREAM

[回到首页](#)

WANG YONGCHEN ONLINE: ENVIRONMENTALIST WITH A DREAM

Editor's note:

Ms. Wang Yongchen -- president of Green Earth Volunteers, a Chinese non-governmental organization, and a senior environmental reporter for the Beijing-based China National Radio -- was one of the organizers of an unprecedented public campaign to save the Nujiang River in southwest China. The initiative brought together non-governmental organizations, scientists, government officials as well as the general public to oppose a project to build 13 dams on the river and to call instead for development along the Nujiang that respects the environment and local communities. Their efforts led to Premier Wen Jiabao's announcement in April 2004 that the project would be put on hold because of concerns about the environment and ethnic minorities. One of the last of Asia's pristine waterways, the 1,750 mile Nujiang River is home to more than 7,000 plant species, more than half of China's animal species, and some 22 ethnic minority groups. On August 13, 2004, People's Daily Online invited Ms. Wang to share her views in an Internet chat at www.people.com.cn. The following are excerpts.

Wang Yongchen: Hello, Friends. I am delighted to be here today to chat with you on the Internet. Frankly, I prefer to be in the wilderness, rather than in the city, and I'd like to share my feelings about nature in the wild with you. As a reporter, I have been to many places and have discovered many things worth sharing. I want to talk with you about the problems I have found, and I hope that you will work with me to find solutions for the betterment of our planet.

Question: Ms. Wang, do you think it difficult to raise general awareness about the importance of environmental protection in China?

Wang: The biggest problem in increasing awareness, I think, is that environmental protection still involves nothing but slogans. While many people see a conflict between economic development and environmental protection, I believe that when you come closer to nature to learn more about it, you will find no real conflict between the two. On the contrary, a deteriorating environment makes economic development a "mission impossible." It is just like when people sacrifice health to make money and then have to spend that money to recover their health. The Green Earth Volunteers is a big family of nature lovers. If you are interested in our goals, just join us and you will be surprised at how much you will enjoy.

Question: I am impressed by the practice in Europe where concern for the environment is introduced at a very young age. Children learn to identify different kinds of animals, classify waste and recycle. Take Germany, for example, where all kinds of drinks are sold in bottles, and every bottle is retrieved for recycling. In Germany 100 percent of sewage water is recycled. What do we teach our children about environmental protection? What role does environmental education play in China? These are my questions.

Wang: I was in Europe in June. I was surprised to be told that the Germans had learned about waste management from China. This unexpected piece of information reminded me of the years when I was a child when after we finished a meal with meat, we sold the leftover bones for about 14 fen per kilo. It is ironic that we are learning from the Germans something that they claim to have learned from us. I think the problem here is that people are so preoccupied with something great that they overlook the small things. It is a small thing to turn off the faucet when you soap your hands. But if everyone did this, do you know how much water we could save?

[订阅电子杂志](#)

[义卖物品](#)

[工作机会](#)

[成为资助者](#)

[加入会员](#)

The figure is astronomical. Recently, government agencies in Beijing have been promoting the Seven Methods of Saving Water. But whose responsibility is it to practice these methods? As far as I know, both government agencies and the media waste a dreadful amount of water through water tank leakage. The point is: the government agencies that make the rules about saving water and the media that are supposed to monitor enforcement of these rules do not themselves follow the rules. It is alright for us to admire what other countries are doing, but it is more important for us to look to ourselves, starting by doing the small things. It is concrete actions not empty slogans that really work. As for children, they are just like blank sheets of paper, open to all ideas. What they learn as children will influence them all their lives. But it's we adults who are responsible for their education. I believe that it is high time for everyone on the earth to have an understanding of nature and problems related to nature. The most important thing is that we do small things, or start by doing one thing.

Question: Ms. Wang, can you tell us, of all your experiences in protecting the environment, what incident or experience moved or shocked you most? Thanks!

Wang: In 1993, I traveled to the Tibetan Plateau for an interview. I saw lovely blue skies, white clouds, green grasslands and wild animals running freely - all of which filled me with joy. But I also saw a wild yak killed by people. The blood of the yak dyed the river bank red. The yak's horns were pointing to the sky as if the yak were asking the heaven, "Why do humans kill me?" From that moment on, I decided to tell audiences about the beauty of nature as well as the destruction that humans inflict. From that moment on, I also began to introduce more and more friends to nature. Together we all can learn through coming in touch with nature.

Question: As you know, China suffers from a shortage of water resources. However, the recent increase of domestic water fees has come under much criticism. What do you think about it?

Wang: The new measure is really a last resort. My husband and I use seven tons of water a month, but there are cases where one person can consume more than 100 tons of water a month. This is not about cost - it's a reflection of the crisis of survival that we humans face.

Question: Ms. Wang, what inspired you to organize an environmental protection volunteer's group? How is the Green Earth Volunteers doing now? What problems have you encountered?

Wang: Non-governmental organizations usually start with education, and then have their voices gradually heard. We organize regular activities such as birding and planting trees and grass on barren mountains and deserts. We also organize eco-tourism. We have just come back from our tour in Eerguna of Inner Mongolia. Eighty volunteers had a great time there, enjoying the most beautiful wetlands and virgin forests in China. We do not go to these places just for fun. We organize press conferences every month and offer lectures every Wednesday. We are particularly worried that the last few free-flowing rivers in

China face being dammed soon. This is just like cutting off the arteries in a human body. Even the Nujiang River located in a World Heritage Site is now being tortured by humans. Fortunately, with the support of leaders from the central government, we will go on with our campaign to protect the last free-flowing rivers on the earth.

Question: Ms. Wang, are you supported by the government? Do you cooperate with foreign environmental organizations?

Wang: Many of our activities are carried out in the cooperation with state and local environmental protection bureaus. For instance, when we were planting trees on the West Hukou area in Shanxi province, the vice provincial governor joined us. Some international foundations give much support to environmental protection efforts in China. We do cooperate with them. Because of the work I am doing for free-flowing rivers, especially the Nujiang River, a prominent American tourist magazine listed our effort as one of the world environmental protection tasks. I believe this is an honor for all Chinese environmental NGOs. We are planning to use the \$20,000 award for further protection of free-flowing rivers. [Wang Yongchen in 2004 won a \$20,000 Conde Nast Traveller environmental award from the New York-based magazine for her work publicizing the environmental impact of the proposed Nujiang River Dam project.]

Question: Ms. Wang, it should be said that some of the obstacles to environmental protection come from local government officials under the name of economic development and regional benefits. Have you encountered any obstacles of this kind? What did you do about it? The influence of the media still has its limit.

Wang: We oppose the excessive construction of dams. Local officials, under the pretext of alleviating poverty, seek to promote their own interests through dam construction projects. Of course, the massive benefits to hydro-energy companies should not be overlooked. A saying goes: building houses brings you straw; building roads brings silver; building bridges, gold and building dams, diamonds.

Question: As we all know, there is no regular environmental protection program on our radio or TV. However, in the United States, PBS offers regular environmental programs in which audiences are exposed to such things as popular science and education, documentaries, discussions on government rules and regulations.

Wang: It is a great pity as far as I am concerned. A few years ago, I hosted a weekly program at Beijing Television (BTV) and Beijing People's Broadcasting Station (BPBS). At present, most programs for Green Space aired at CCTV-10 are purchased from other countries, while our own eco-problems have no channel of expression. I hope www.people.com.cn will work with us to be a voice for nature.

Question: Hello, Ms. Wang. What do you think of the assertion that Chinese environmental protection laws and regulations are ahead of the times and are therefore not enforceable? Thanks!

Wang: The problem we face today is that existing laws are not well enforced. The Environment Impact Assessment Law has been in effect since September 1, 2003. One of its key clauses requires participation by local residents. However, the current situation is that -- no matter if a construction project is large or small -- the voice of local people is not heard. It is lack of enforcement that silences the opinions. The very existence of NGOs is supposed to provide a way for the voice of people on the local level to be heard. I'd like to take as an example the issue of the relocation of the Beijing Zoo. The government wanted to relocate the zoo, but the people did not. As a result, the relocation was cancelled. This is the power of public participation. If this is what you mean by "being ahead of the times," we will just have to adjust to it, for damage to nature is irreversible.

Question: Ms. Wang, as far as your own work goes, what indications do you see of a lack of environmental awareness in China? What are your suggestions?

Wang: Actually, I talked about this just now: we have too much talk but not enough action. I suggest that everyone come closer to nature, get to know nature and make friends with nature. There are small things we can do: turn off faucets to save water, limit use of plastic bags and set air conditioners not below 26 C in summer to save electricity. These may seem "small" things, but if everybody would do them - then rivers, forests and mountains would take care of themselves.

Question: Ms. Wang, being an environmentalist requires energy and financial resources. How do your husband and child feel about your involvement in environmental protection? Best wishes for your family.

Wang: Ours is a "DINK" family, Double Income No Kids. My husband and I agreed when we were married 20 years ago that we would not have children. Today our common interest is to befriend nature. As for money, I do not have much desire for it. To be warm and have a full stomach is enough. So far, my husband and I have financed the education of six children, one of whom has graduated from college. She often called me "Mom," which made me feel a bit awkward, so we made a pact that she should call me "Ganma" [adoptive mother]. I will not leave her any inheritance, but she shares our interest in protecting nature. To promote environmental awareness on limited funds, using the media offers many advantages. Let's go back to the tree planting case. The vice-provincial governor donated 1000 yuan. The problem is not a lack of money but getting people to help. With community involvement, we can always raise money.

Question: What does your husband do? Is he also enthusiastic about environmental protection?

Wang: Before his retirement, he worked for the People's Music Press. Now he writes at home. He enjoys playing the violin, which he took up at a very young age, and going on trips to the outskirts of the city. Our favorite place is the Summer Palace. We often take a walk around the Kunming Lake between 5 pm to 7 pm on weekends, where we can see different views in the different seasons. What we enjoy most is watching the sun set. We can relax after a busy week and begin a new week there, in the old imperial garden.

Question: Hi, Ms. Wang. No matter how much we talk about environmental protection, it is the attitude of local governments at different levels that counts; that is, whether they work for individual profit or for the common good. I once debated with some people on the topic, arguing that the poor love environmental protection while the rich fear it and local governments oppose it. What do you think?

Wang: Aren't Americans or Europeans rich? Bill Gates, the richest man in the world, has his house built beside a beautiful lake in the mountains where he lives a simple life. Queen Elizabeth II has her cook use left-over beef to make meat loaf for her next meal. Her chamberlain disclosed this piece of information to the BBC. Recently I visited an old revolutionary who had suffered a stroke. She did not say a word until her daughter told us a story: in Kangding city of Sichuan province, a kind of 24-hour feast is popular among leaders, and every new city administration has bought SUVs worth half a million yuan each. And this is happening in impoverished areas. On hearing the story, the elderly woman said in a trembling voice, "Chairman Mao said, 'Corruption and extravagance are both crimes'." It has been a month since my visit to this woman, but her words keep echoing in my mind.

Question: It is said that you have a dream; that is, you want to record the different sounds of nature and build a sound museum. What's your plan for your dream?

Wang: This is my dream, and I have collected many materials. I hope that some day I will be able to sit in the sound museum with friends to listen to the howl of the ocean, the whistle of air in the trees and the whisper of animals. However, it takes much time to record these sounds. I hope some day I can share these marvelous sounds with you!

Question: Is it true to say that developing countries actually find themselves without the means for environmental protection?

Wang: Through what means do you make friends with nature and appreciate nature? Aren't you equating environmental protection with fighting a battle here? Actually, loving nature is just like loving ourselves. When you do something wholeheartedly and see the results, you will really enjoy it. It is true that you will feel sad when you see no results. Just try to think about the endurance of nature and you will survive any difficulty. These ups and downs also make for a kind of diversity that makes life more exciting and colorful, thus making you more determined and enthusiastic. Isn't that true?

It has been a pleasure to talk with you. Loving nature is not a burden but a pleasure. The problem is that not enough people have experienced this. So my hope in sharing my enjoyment in protecting nature with you is that some day you will share it with your friends. You are welcome to visit the Green Earth Volunteers' website: www.chinagev.org. Thanks!

(Translated by Chen Juebin)

来源：

作者：自然之友

日期：2007-06-03 16:41:01

相关文章：

没有相关文章



[全文搜索](#) | [友情链接](#) | [版权声明](#) [回到首页](#)

[Translate This Website](#)

COPYRIGHT (C) 2003 FRIENDS OF NATURE. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED 网站建设：格林万 京ICP05065476号

电话：(+86-10)65232040/65120929/65120827/65120937 境外法律咨询电话：15210761623

地址：北京市城区青年湖西里5号楼4层 邮编：100010 [地图](#)



自然之友网站 by 自然之友 is licensed under a Creative Commons 署名-非商业性使用-禁止演绎 2.5 中国大陆 License.
基于<http://www.fon.org.cn>上的作品创作。