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**XI'S PHOTOGRAPHS OF THESE RARE MONKEYS GARNERED NATIONAL MEDIA ATTENTION.**

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When Xi Zhinong was 19 years old, a Chinese film crew shooting in his native Yunnan province hired him as an assistant. Their subject was the region's rich bird life. An avid observer of wild animals, Xi had a special fondness for birds—one not shared by the crew's cinematographer. “The cameraman didn't like birds at all,” Xi remembers. “In order to film some newly hatched chicks, he tied their legs to the nest. But after he finished filming he didn't bother to untie them.” The next day Xi found the chicks dead in their nest. “I was really furious,” he says. “That day I decided to become a cameraman myself, so I could film free-flying birds in Yunnan.”

Xi went on to create China's first and only wildlife film and photography agency, Wild China Film, with his journalist wife Shi Lihong. Xi specializes in the wildlife of Western China, especially endangered species such as the Yunnan snub-nosed monkey, the world's highest-altitude primate. He was the first photographer ever to capture this rare creature in the wild, garnering national media attention. “We knew the monkeys were being poached,” says Xi. “Then I discovered a scheme by the local government to do logging in the monkeys' habitat.” Xi petitioned higher authorities to intervene. His letter and photograph of a snub-nosed monkey madonna and child made their way to national newspapers, and the story ended up on China's all-powerful CCTV television network. “Almost immediately the central government ordered the local government to stop the logging,” says Xi. “And two years later, China issued a logging ban on all old-growth forest.” Since then, Yunnan's snub-nosed monkey population has surged.

—RUSSELL HART

# Xi ZHINONG

P O R T F O L I O







Xi's images of these extremely rare snub-nosed monkeys precipitated a logging ban by the national government.