



## Yangtze Freshwater Dolphin Expedition 2006

# Hope dies last

International science network searching for the world's rarest species of mammal

**Shanghai, December 3 – After 26 days of travel and 1750 kilometers, the expedition vessels have arrived in Shanghai December 2. Up to this point, the researchers have seen no baiji and less than 300 Yangtze finless porpoises.**

The expedition crew is discouraged, but there is still a chance too see some baiji on the way back to Wuhan. «There were several days of poor weather conditions, which made surveying almost impossible», says Wang Ding, director of Baiji reserach group of the Institue of Hydrobiology Wuhan. «We will double our efforts and keep our eyes peeled for baiji on the way back.»

Meanwhile, there is more hope fort he Yangtze finless porpoise, as the expedition crew found almost 300 animals. «However», as August Pfluger, ceo of baiji.org Foundation says, «we must increase in future our efforts on Yangtze finless propoise conservation, as else they will become the second baiji.»

After seeing the Yangtze habitat, the researchers came to the conclusion, if there were any baiji in the river, relocation to the Tian-e-Zhou seminaturale reserve will be the only option. The baiji river dolphin is a prominent victim of the rapid growth of China's economy and is now the world's rarest mammal, with the current population living in the Yangtze in Central China, its native habitat, estimated to be less than 50. Continued destruction of the biotope, the fishing industry and collisions with vessels have brought the vulnerable dolphin to the verge of extinction.

Good news are coming from the habitat survey team from Eawag aquatic research Switzerland and the Institue of Hydrobiology Wuhan. There were sample sets taken on 29 different locations along the river so far. The samples will be examined for 40 different pollutants by various SGS labs in China.

The expedition will be finished around December 15 and is being co-organized by the Wuhan Institute of Hydrobiology and the Swiss-based baiji.org Foundation The major project partners are SGS, Anheuser-Busch, SeaWorld and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC). Other project partners include Canon, Fujinon, Garmin, Katadyn, KühneNagel, Pictet, Transa, Victorinox and Ziemann.

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### Pilot Yangtze freshwater Dolphin Expedition 2006

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