

Outrage about fake photograph of antelopes, Tibet railway

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(Wall Street Journal; Xinhua; CCTV; Chengdu Business Daily; Daqing Evening News) Xinhua, China's state-run news agency, issued a public apology for publishing a doctored photograph of endangered Tibetan antelopes (chiru) apparently frolicking near the Qinghai-Tibet railway. The picture shot by Liu Weiqing, a wildlife photographer from the Daqing Evening News, featured dozens of antelope galloping peacefully across the Tibetan landscape, unfazed as the train raced beside them. It was captioned *"Qinghai-Tibet railway opens green passage for wildlife"*. Liu claimed to have waited in a pit for eight days for the antelope to pass at precisely the same moment as the train. He spent several months on the Tibetan Plateau for a highly publicized series by the Daqing Evening News meant to raise awareness of the rare Tibetan antelope. Liu who was also under contract with Xinhua said *"I wanted to capture the harmony among the Tibetan antelope, the train, men and nature"*. In late 2006, Liu's picture was declared one of the top ten *"Photographs of the year"* by CCTV, China's state-run television network. The endangered antelope has recently emerged as a symbol of China's environmental-protection efforts. It is one of the five official mascots of the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Suspicions about the photo emerged after its display in Beijing's subway system. Chinese internet users finally uncovered the deception. Cornered by the mounting evidence, Liu admitted he had indeed used Photoshop to blend two pictures. Liu resigned from the Daqing Evening News and posted a statement on his blog. *"I have no reason to continue my sacred career as a newsman"*, he wrote, *"I am not qualified for the job"*. His editor then resigned too, and the newspaper posted an apology on its website. CCTV posted a statement saying it was revoking Mr. Liu's award. Xinhua and several other government news organisations published an apology for circulating the photo. They said they would delete all of Liu's images from their databases. The issue has brought on new debates about media ethics and the environmental sustainability of the Qinghai-Tibet railway.

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