



Surprisingly Human

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Contact: Tahli Kouperstein, 240-662-2221

Tahli_kouperstein@discovery.com

Matthew Windsor, 240-662-6781

Matthew_Windsor@discovery.com

SAVING AFRICA'S GIANTS WITH YAO MING PREMIERES NOVEMBER 18
ON ANIMAL PLANET; NARRATED BY EDWARD NORTON

*-- World-famous Basketball Star and Wildlife Advocate Yao Ming Exposes African Poaching Epidemic,
Which Fuels a Multi-billion-dollar, International Black Market--*

(New York)— Last year, 25,000 African elephants were murdered, victims of senseless ivory poaching. Fortunately, these magnificent giants have a defender in basketball superstar and wildlife advocate, Yao Ming. On **Tuesday, November 18, at 10 PM ET/PT**, Yao travels to Africa to witness first-hand the horrible consequences of poaching in **SAVING AFRICA'S GIANTS WITH YAO MING**.

The one-hour special, narrated by actor Edward Norton, follows Yao, who is a cultural icon in both his native China and in the US. Yao's on a journey where he quickly realizes the real war is not in Africa but in the marketplace. Yao travels to Kenya, home to the ancient Samburu people and a natural habitat of African elephants. Elephants are part of the Samburu heritage and are critical to their livelihood. Poaching not only destroys the wild species but also the tribal villagers who depend on them. Yao meets with Iain Douglas-Hamilton, renowned elephant expert who echoes WildAid's dire conservation message, which he urges Yao to bring home and disseminate globally: it's a race against time for these elephants; when the buying stops, the killing can too.

"The huge price motivates poachers to persist," says Yao. "And if we buy ivory, it makes all of us killers as well."

Every year, the death toll rises, and 4.5 million elephants have been killed in the last 60 years as part of one of the most organized, widespread wildlife trafficking networks in history. Yao hopes his influence in his homeland and his combination of strength, vision and voice serves as a megaphone to help spread awareness about the cruelty of poaching.

"Yao represents the next generation of conservationists. Having him as an ambassador is probably the best thing that could happen to wildlife," says Peter Knights, executive director of WildAid, the world's only organization focused on reducing the demand for poached products. On his journey, Yao sees for himself the evidence of a losing battle, where Africa's giants are senselessly slain *every day* for their tusks.

Unfortunately, elephants are not the only victims to poaching. Rhinos are poached for their horns at a record rate as two rhinos a day are slain in South Africa alone. Yao travels to the Kariega Game Reserve, located at South Africa's East Cape, to experience the struggle and pain of orphaned rhinos, whose parents have been killed.

“When our message is spread by those who see this documentary, people can join us and hopefully wipe out this black market,” says Yao.

In September of this year, **SAVING AFRICA'S GIANTS WITH YAO MING** and Animal Planet were recognized at the 2014 Clinton Global Initiative (CGI) Annual Meeting as part of the organization's Commitment to Action to Save African Elephants.

SAVING AFRICA'S GIANTS WITH YAO MING is produced for Animal Planet by NHNZ and WildAid. For Animal Planet, Erin Wanner is executive producer, and Hilary Tholen is associate producer. For WildAid, Peter Knights is executive producer. For NHNZ, Judith Curran is executive producer, Andrew Waterworth is head of production, and Kyle Murdoch is executive in charge of production. Kurt Tondorf, vice president of development for Animal Planet, developed the special.

About Animal Planet

Animal Planet, a multi-media business unit of Discovery Communications, is the world's only entertainment brand that immerses viewers in the full range of life in the animal kingdom with rich, deep content via multiple platforms and offers animal lovers and pet owners access to a centralized online, television and mobile community for immersive, engaging, high-quality entertainment, information and enrichment. Animal Planet consists of the Animal Planet television network, available in more than 94 million homes in the US; online assets www.animalplanet.com, the ultimate online destination for all things animal; [Animal Planet LIVE](#), the go-to digital destination for round-the-clock, unfiltered access to the animal kingdom; and other media platforms including a robust Video-on-Demand (VOD) service, and merchandising extensions.