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**Remarkable Series of Films from China on Environmental Themes
at 10th Annual Planet in Focus International Environmental Film Fest
– October 21-25 at various venues in Toronto –**

Toronto, October 14, 2009- The **tenth annual Planet in Focus International Environmental Film & Video Festival** runs **October 21 through October 25** in Toronto with over 85 outstanding and compelling films and videos from 25 countries – documentaries and dramatic, animated, and experimental works of all lengths – created by Canadian and international filmmakers on key environmental themes.

As part of its 10-year celebration, Canada's preeminent environmental film festival showcases a remarkable series of films from China on environmental themes that give a broad picture of that country's burgeoning environmental movement, and how filmmakers are tackling important issues. These unique works have never been seen before in Canada.

As China's prominence in global affairs continues to grow, these films offer crucial perspectives on the challenges and changes the country is facing and give a sense of the richness and variety of Chinese storytelling styles and traditions. The films speak to the environmental impact of unprecedented change in the countryside, in remote villages, in forests, and in urban settings; and include the feature-length dramas *Bird's Nest* and *Rural Litigation*; and documentaries *Ji Ji Grass*, *Golden Monkey* and *A Vanishing Village*, among others.

The full program (in date order):

DRAMATIC FEATURES The program spotlights two very different but equally compelling and unique dramatic features:

Bird's Nest (90 min, 2008, Ning Jinwu)

Canadian premiere screens October 22 at Bloor Cinema at 7pm

- Jiang Xiangma is a young boy from the Miao minority in Guizhou province whose father is a migrant worker in Beijing, building the Bird's Nest for the Olympic Games. His friends think it must be a home for birds, but he knows it's for the Olympic Games – and decides to go to Beijing to prove it. A tender coming-of-age story, the film also addresses contemporary Chinese issues of labour, poverty and modernization, while touching on the importance of nature in Chinese culture.

Rural Litigation (90 min, 2008, Han Wan Feng)

World premiere screens October 23 at Innis College at 7pm

- Song Sanmei, a single mother fighting to save the town from a water supply tainted by the local chemical plant, owes money to a group of gangsters who are threatening to tear her house down. The ethical complexities of environmentalism in the developing world are highlighted in this tense, heart-wrenching drama about pollution, corruption and social pressure in a highly stratified, politically developing society.

DOCUMENTARIES The program includes a rich slate of documentaries that address the country's tumultuous growth through the filters of Chinese history, culture and storytelling:

Ji Ji Grass and **A Vanishing Village** look at the issues surrounding relocation, giving a sense of how China's move to the centre of the world stage, and its consequent developments in tourism and

environmentalism, are affecting its rural citizens. **Bird Whisper**, **Silent Valley** and **Forest China: The Golden Monkey Family in Qinling Mountains** offer three different interpretations of the nature/wildlife film, touching on issues as diverse as Buddhist philosophy and the SARS outbreak. **Living With Shame** gives voice to migrant workers at a waste metal processing site in Fengjiang, providing an unflinching and unsettling counterpart to *Bird's Nest's* gentle, comedic look at what migrant workers mean to modern China.

Forest China: The Golden Monkey Family in Qinling Mountains screens together with the Korean film, Lives at Risk: The Toads on Oct 24, 11am @ the ROM

- **Forest China: The Golden Monkey Family in Qinling Mountains** (40/2007/Xianqing Chen/Canadian premiere)

Deck rules his colony of golden monkeys perched on a red birch. His favorites are Yuanyuan and her son Little Yuan. His adversary is Parted Hair. A story of rivalry and tragedy is framed by the pristine forest home to crested ibis and giant panda.

Living With Shame, Bird Whisper and Silent Valley screen together on Oct 24, 7pm @ Innis College:

- **Living With Shame** (25/2008/Huaqing Jin/Canadian premiere)

Fengjiang, China is a center for the dismantling of global waste metals. The promise of income has brought many migrant workers to the town, but the work has untold health costs.

- **Bird Whisper** (29/2008/Lu Bin/Canadian premiere)

Nicknamed the "Bird-Watching Lama," Zhaxi Sange is a joyous Tibetan abbot who has recorded more than 400 bird species in drawings and field journals in the context of Buddhism and the culture of the people of the Qinghai-Tibetan Plateau.

- **Silent Valley** (56/2008/Tian Rong/World premiere)

This dark, captivating film focuses on the masked palm civet, an animal that was briefly believed to be a carrier of the SARS virus. What at first seems to be a wildlife documentary becomes a strange, cautionary poem about where we allocate our fear.

These two films screen together on Oct 25, 1pm @ Innis College:

- **JiJi Grass** (35/2007/Huang Jian/Canadian premiere)

A wild grass grows near the Great Wall of China within the Gobi Desert that has seven roots. Called JiJi grass, it is resilient like the villagers who face a new challenge: becoming a tourist site.

- **A Vanishing Village** (55/2007/Zhao Yanying/North American premiere)

The flip-side of preserving wild areas for species is the displacement of people who have lived on the land for generations. This is life unraveling under the weight of bureaucracy: villagers leaving a sustainable lifestyle to save the environment in China.

2009 Planet in Focus International Environmental Film & Video Festival Oct. 21 - Oct. 25, 2009

For tickets to screenings & events, book in advance at www.planetinfocus.org OR call the Box Office at 416-967-1528 OR visit the Festival Box Office at 2 Carlton St., West Mezzanine, Toronto.

Tickets also available one hour prior at screening venue.

Screenings: \$10 (\$8 seniors and students, \$5 children under 12);

Opening & Closing Galas: \$20 Opening Night Gala/Reception; \$15 Closing Night Awards /Reception.

For All Access Passes (\$100) and Special Events call: 416 531 4689

Venues include Royal Cinema, Bloor Cinema, Gardiner Museum, The Bata Shoe Museum, Innis College, Arta Gallery and the Royal Ontario Museum (ROM).

For full schedule details, visit www.planetinfocus.org