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[Fuxian](#) (抚仙湖) is reputedly the cleanest lake in China, and also the deepest, containing an estimated ten percent of all the lake water in China. With the squalid [Dianchi Lake](#) (滇池) only 25 kilometers away, Fuxian is routinely showcased as a shining standard for environmental conservation in Yunnan. This elevated status is part of the reason three tourists are currently being [eviscerated on Chinese social media](#).

The group was photographed bathing near a hot spring that feeds the lake by another unrelated traveler on September 12. While swimming is allowed in the lake, one of the trio was caught on camera washing her hair with shampoo. Once the image was published on Chinese social media the firestorm began, and continues unabated nearly two weeks later.

Starting in 2007 with a law entitled *Protection Regulations for Yunnan Province's Fuxian Lake*, preservation of the body of water has fallen under the auspices of the provincial government. Motorized boat traffic — excluding emergency watercraft — was banned

and [dozens of other prohibitions](#) resembling those enforced by national parks in the United States were put in place.



With this level of protection, local environmental awareness has grown tremendously over the intervening nine years, and now residents living around the lake have become sometimes vocal advocates against littering. Many people circulating the photo and commenting on it via Weixin and Weibo are operating under the assumption that the photographer was a Fuxian local using online shame to, as the Chinese idiom goes, "kill a chicken to scare the monkeys".

For now, the offending threesome remains unidentified, although some more vocal microbloggers have called for a police investigation and arrests. Many others are referring to the woman shampooing her hair as *dama* (大妈) — or "big momma". The term is pejorative Chinese slang for selfish middle-aged women who act badly in public. The Yuxi Chengjiang County Fuxian Lake Administration, according to newspaper [South China Morning Post](#), recently hired 200 inspectors to stop "uncivilized behavior", one of whom has been punished for "allowing" the shampoo incident to happen.

In addition to countless posts and discussions on social media, press outlets across the country [seized on the misdeed](#) to highlight the growing sense of environmental

awareness amongst China's citizenry. One can only hope that such concern over Fuxian — the shores of which are ever more crowded with resorts and tourists — will prompt people around the country to think twice before littering.

**Top image:** [Yereth Jansen](#)

**Bottom image:** [Junmin](#)