

South China tigers may be extinct

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Scientists fear the South China Tiger, one of the world's most endangered species, may be extinct in the wild.

If that is true, the only remaining members of the species are the 68 now living in 18 Chinese zoos, Xinhua, the official government new agency, said. Those tigers are all descended from two males and four females captured in either the 1950s or 1970s and provide too little genetic diversity to preserve the species.

"If we can't find any wild south China tigers, they will certainly disappear because of the inbreeding," said Huang Zihong, a zoologist.

Scientists from the South China Institute of Endangered Species began a search for wild tigers in October, but so far have had little success.

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