

Panda genome resembles dog: Chinese media

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Scientists from the Beijing Genomics Institute finished sequencing the giant panda genome in October last year but a detailed genome map was only recently completed, Xinhua news agency said.

"The research found there is a high genomic similarity between giant panda and dog," the report said, but added that the research also supported the view of most scientists that the giant panda may be a

subspecies of the bear family.

The detailed mapping showed that the giant panda has 21 pairs of [chromosomes](#) and more than 20,000 genes, Xinhua said.

The research is expected to provide scientific support for the conservation, disease prevention and artificial propagation of the endangered [giant panda](#), researchers have said.

"We hope the genome map could help genetically explain why giant pandas have little reproductive capability so that scientists can help them deliver more cubs," Wang Jun, a scientist with the institute, was quoted in the state press as saying earlier.

Chinese experts say there are only about 1,600 wild pandas in China, mainly in the southwest, with another 200 or so raised in captivity in Chinese breeding centres.

The animals' notoriously low libidos have frustrated efforts to boost their numbers.

Breeders have resorted to tactics such as showing them "panda porn" videos of other pandas mating, and putting males through "sexercises" aimed at training up their pelvic and leg muscles for the rigours of copulation.

Scientists hope also to eventually gain a better understanding of why [pandas](#) subsist almost solely on bamboo, another factor viewed as inhibiting the species' range and adaptability.

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