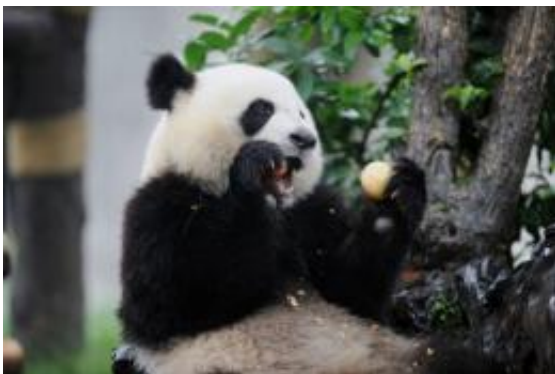


China sends pandas into forest to bring up cubs in wild

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A giant panda is seen playing at a panda reserve in Chengdu, southwest China's Sichuan province. Four pregnant pandas bred in captivity have been released into an area of forest in southwest China to prepare their cubs for life in the wild, state media reported.

Four pregnant pandas bred in captivity have been released into an area of forest in southwest China to prepare their cubs for life in the wild, state media reported.

The pandas, aged four to five, have been taken to a tract of forest at a training base in Sichuan province that was built to help the [endangered animals](#) adapt to the wild, the official Xinhua news agency said.

They are expected to give birth to their cubs in the woodland, which covers two hectares (five acres), and live there until the young animals

turn three or four, the report said late Saturday.

"All of the carefully-chosen pandas have experience of living in the wild and three of them... have given birth to cubs," Tang Chunxiang, an expert at the Wolong panda reserve that is behind the initiative, was quoted as saying.

"We hope the mothers can teach their cubs life skills to help them survive in the wild."

There are only about 1,590 pandas left in the wild in China, and authorities would like to increase that figure to save the [endangered species](#).

But so far, the only attempt at releasing a captive-bred panda into nature ended tragically.

Xiang Xiang, a male [cub](#) who was trained to adapt to the wild and released in 2006, was found dead 10 months later, apparently killed by wild pandas native to the area.

This new attempt aims to see the four pandas give birth and raise their cubs on their own, while workers keep watch through [surveillance cameras](#).

"If they need help, the workers will show up dressed in costumes that make them look like giant [pandas](#), in order to reduce the animals' reliance on humans," Tang was quoted as saying.

The workers will also simulate the sounds and smells of the panda's natural enemies, in a bid to improve their vigilance and raise their chances of survival, the report said.

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