

China pandas 'panicked' as forest home jolted in quake

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Giant pandas eat bamboo at the Bifengxia Base of China Conservation and Research Centre in Ya'an, southwest Sichuan province, on April 20, 2013. Pandas living in a reserve near the epicentre of China's weekend quake clambered up trees in panic as their forest home was jolted, but none were injured, according to Chinese officials.

Pandas living in a reserve near the epicentre of China's weekend quake

clambered up trees in panic as their forest home was jolted, but none were injured, officials said Monday.

More than 60 [pandas](#) at the Bifengxia Panda Base near Ya-an city were shaken early Saturday by the quake which struck just 50 kilometers (31 miles) away, leaving at least 188 people dead and more than 11,000 injured.

Some pandas climbed high into the [tree canopy](#) when the 6.6-magnitude earthquake struck and suffered "differing degrees of shock," the facility said on its website.

Pictures taken by the reserve showed the furry creatures clinging onto [tree trunks](#), while state-broadcaster CCTV showed one panda perched perilously on the top of a tall pine tree, which swayed from side to side.

Ren Yao from Bifengxia's publicity office said that "no pandas or people were injured" in the weekend quake. However, some sections of the facility were damaged, she said without elaborating.

Animals at the base were "slack jawed" with shock after the quake struck, China's official news-agency Xinhua reported.

But staff said that after therapy from staff, the pandas were now feeling secure enough to climb back down to earth.

"The pandas have climbed down from the trees... they are back on the ground, playing and eating," Ren told AFP.

Staff comforted the animals by feeding them favourite foods including apples and calling their names, she added, as more than 2,000 [aftershocks](#) set human—and animals—nerves on edge.

"In the last two days, there were a series of aftershocks, and we continued efforts to comfort the pandas... they are already feeling stable," she said.

China has about 1,600 pandas living in the wild, mostly in earthquake-prone Sichuan province in China's southwest.

A massive 2008 [quake](#) which left more than 90,000 people dead and missing seriously affected another habitat, the Wolong nature reserve, forcing its pandas to be transferred to other bases including Bifengxia.

One animal was killed, another went missing, and some 60,000 hectares (148,000 acres) of the animals' habitat was damaged.

Pandas have a notoriously low reproductive rate and are under pressure from factors such as habitat loss in their home terrain of Sichuan, northern Shaanxi and northwestern Gansu provinces.

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