

Protections put in place to offset global warming effective at keeping panda populations strong

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A team of researchers affiliated with several institutions in China and one in the U.S. has found that efforts to stabilize giant panda populations

in the face of global warming have been successful. In their paper published in *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, the group describes their study of climate change in the region where most of China's pandas live, and panda census data collected over multiple counts over the past several decades.

Prior research has shown that when temperatures rise in China's Sichuan province (home to 75% of the country's pandas), giant panda populations fall. Prior research has also shown the main reason for the [population](#) drop is the associated reduction of bamboo in the region's [forest](#). With that knowledge in mind, [resource managers](#) in China have been undertaking efforts to increase the amount of bamboo that grows in the region even as temperatures continue to rise due to global warming. One such effort was enacting laws that prevented human encroachment. In this new effort, the researchers have looked at decades worth of data to find out if such measures have been successful.

Researchers in China have kept close tabs on panda populations by conducting multi-year giant panda surveys—they have done three of them over the past 35 years (1985 to 1988, 1988 to 2002 and 2011 to 2014). Such surveys have shown that panda populations have remained relatively steady. During the same [time period](#), temperatures have risen in the area due to climate change. The researchers suggest that the efforts of resource management have altered the determining factors related to panda populations—climate change has become relatively less important as forest management has become more important. They note that there is now more [forest cover](#) in the region than there was 30 years ago, providing the pandas with all the food they can eat.

Unfortunately, it is not clear if forest management techniques will be enough in the future as the planet grows ever hotter. The researchers suggest new studies focusing on conditions in the future could answer that question, and perhaps figure out if other [forest management](#)

techniques might be useful, as well.

More information: Junfeng Tang et al. Climate change and landscape-use patterns influence recent past distribution of giant pandas, *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences* (2020). [DOI: 10.1098/rspb.2020.0358](https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2020.0358)

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