

Pandas could be extinct in 2-3 generations: report

17 August 2009



A panda cub is seen playing at the Giant Panda Breeding Centre in Chengdu. There are about 1,590 pandas living in the wild around China, mostly in southwestern Sichuan, northern Shaanxi and northwestern Gansu provinces. A total of 180 have been bred in captivity, according to reports.

China's giant panda could be extinct in just two to three generations as rapid economic development is infringing on its way of life, state media said on Monday, citing an expert at conservation group WWF.

The problem is that the pandas' habitat is being split up into ever smaller patches, preventing the animals from roaming freely for mating partners and in turn endangering their gene pool, the Global Times reported.

"If the panda cannot mate with those from other habitats, it may face [extinction](#) within two to three generations," said Fan Zhiyong, Beijing-based species programme director for WWF. "We have to act now."

The risk of inbreeding is increasing, threatening to reduce the panda's resistance to diseases and lowering its ability to reproduce, the paper said.

Fan said that highways pose major restrictions on

the panda's free movement.

"We may have to give up building some infrastructure," Fan said. "I don't know the solution to this problem."

There are about 1,590 [pandas](#) living in the wild around China, mostly in southwestern Sichuan, northern Shaanxi and northwestern Gansu provinces. A total of 180 have been bred in captivity, according to earlier reports.

In addition to environmental constraints, 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.

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