



WWF

SPECIES

UK





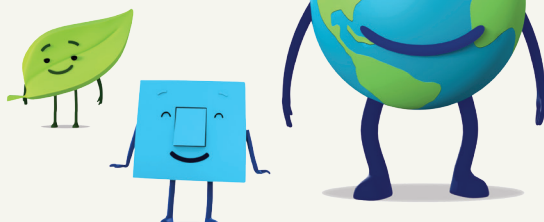
EXPLORE!

Welcome to WWF Explore, a free poster resource for youth groups and young people. Each issue features one key species with news, fascinating facts and great activities to help your group members earn a special badge. This edition looks at the giant panda and their forest homes and how you can help safeguard their future.

© naturepi.com / Edwin Gesbers / WWF

CALLING BUDDING GREEN CHAMPIONS!





Green Ambassadors for Youth – or GA4Y – is a fantastic programme to help 5-14s take the lead on green issues in their groups and their community. Our friendly Green Ambassador team – Leafy, Wheel, Switch, Crush, Smith and Tap – will help them get informed, get involved and get sharing on six topical green issues. Designed with the help of over 100 leaders, it offers six themed activity sets, a suite of posters to help you plan your green journey, and a badge scheme to reward young people for their achievements.



Sign up at wwfyouthscheme.education.co.uk

All our resources are accompanied by a badge. Find out more at wwf.org.uk/ygresources

DID YOU KNOW?

-  Male pandas are called boars, and females sows, just like pigs.
-  In China, giant pandas are also known as 'white bear', 'bamboo bear' and 'large bear cat'.
-  When playing, young pandas have been seen doing somersaults, body twists, and sliding down snowy slopes.
-  Because they eat so much vegetation, pandas do a LOT of poos – they need to go about 40 times a day.



© Michel Günther / WWF

PANDAS

THE SPECIES LOWDOWN

Giant pandas, the symbol of WWF, are instantly recognisable by their beautiful black and white fur. Although their numbers are on the up, with nearly a 17% increase since 2003, there are still only around 1,860 of them left in the wild – so they're classified as Endangered. Giant panda populations have suffered in the past, falling 50% between the 1970s and the 1990s due to habitat loss, poaching and bamboo die-back.

Once, giant pandas were found living in lowland forests of eastern and southern China, northern Vietnam and northern Myanmar, but they're now confined to 33 different population groups in China, living in six isolated mountain ranges in south-western China – that's just 8% of their historic range.

VITAL STATS AND SPECIAL SKILLS

Giant pandas are big, measuring up to 75cm but 170cm when standing up. The males are about 18% bigger than females, weighing between 85-125kg. They're solitary, except during the mating season and while they're rearing a cub. If they want to make their presence felt, they give a high-intensity bark.

Their fur has an important function – to help them blend into their snowy, forested habitat. It keeps them warm too – it grows to up to 8cm on their shoulders but only up to 3cm on their backs. Pandas don't hibernate, but do move to lower ground in the winter where there is more food.

Pandas have an extended wristbone which they use like a thumb. They're pigeon-toed, walking with their front paws turned inwards. They also have much longer tails than other bears, relative to their size. They use these to help spread their scent from special glands near their bottoms, climbing a tree backwards with their hind feet first, and standing on their paws to gain as much height as possible.

Pandas are good swimmers and tree climbers. They start practising when they're about five months old, usually by clambering all over their mothers.

FEEDING

Giant pandas are big animals with the digestive system of a carnivore, but they are 99% vegetarian. This means they need to eat a massive amount to maintain their bodyweight, often spending up to 14 hours every day eating. They relax to do this, reclining or sitting on the ground.

Their favourite food is bamboo, and they eat a variety of species in the wild, needing at least two to avoid starvation. Ideally, they'll eat up to 15kg of bamboo roots, stems and leaves every day. They particularly love 'new' bamboo growth.

The remaining 1% of their diet is made up of whatever they can get their paws on, including eggs, small animals and the remains of other animals. They'll also scavenge farmland for pumpkin, kidney beans, wheat and animal feed.

BREEDING

Pandas are ready to breed from around four years old, but as they're solitary creatures, they need to attract a mate. They do this by chirruping to each other during the spring breeding season. Cubs are born in dens made in hollow trees or rock dens in the early autumn. The tiny cubs weigh just 0.1% of their mother's weight and are so fragile that their mothers use their mouths to pick them up rather than their clumsy paws.

For the first month, mother and cub are in physical contact for the whole time, with the tiny cub protected by her paw, arm or head. They grow fast, and are mobile by the time they're 3 months old. They're weaned at 9 months, but will stay with their mothers until they're 18 months old. Giant pandas can live to 30 years old in captivity, but many don't survive past 20 in the wild.

WHAT'S THE THREAT?

Development

Pandas face a few main threats – the biggest is habitat loss. They share their space with over 1 million people living in 200-odd towns. China's growing fast, and with that comes large scale developments – new roads and rail networks and hydropower facilities for sustainable energy. Building work destroys the pandas' habitat and food, and stops them moving around between territories to find mates. One third of wild giant pandas – and nearly half their habitat – falls outside protected areas, making them very vulnerable.

Climate change

Scientists think that over half their total habitat could be lost to climate change by 2070, and falling numbers of the animals will mean individuals will find it harder to find mates. Species that live in isolated mountains are especially vulnerable to warming as they already have small ranges that will shrink and fragment further. What's more, a warmer, drier climate may increase the occurrence of mass bamboo flowering and die-back – a big problem for a species so heavily dependent on bamboo to survive, especially when human settlements stop them moving to new areas to find bamboo.

Human conflict

Human contact is also a threat. Although the market for panda skins has almost gone, and poaching penalties are severe, pandas do get injured in snares meant for other animals. Livestock grazing and firewood collection by growing communities can also be a threat. As tourism in China increases this also has an impact on panda habitats.

WHAT WWF IS DOING TO HELP

WWF is working to help pandas in several ways. In 1980, we became the first international conservation organisation to work in China, and through our work with the Chinese government, the number of nature reserves in panda habitat has since gone up from 40 in 2003 to 67 today. We've helped plant over 500 hectares of bamboo forest in key panda corridors, and got rid of over 15,000 metres of fences to help reconnect panda habitat. We've also donated over 450 infrared camera traps to gather important information about wildlife and habitats.

Crucially WWF has also promoted sustainable, alternative livelihoods such as bee-keeping, farmhouse homestay businesses and sustainable medicinal plant cultivation within over 190 communities benefiting over 3,000 households. We've also equipped over 6,000 households with fuel efficient cooking stoves and biogas units to reduce their need for fuel wood.

HOW YOU CAN HELP

You can help by adopting one of a group of around 43 pandas - including 10 cubs - in the Taibai county of Shaanxi province of central China. These are lucky bears, because they live in two neighbouring nature reserves - Huangbaiyuan and Niuweihe - in the Qinling Mountains. They also benefit of two nearby panda corridors - areas that join up different bits of habitat - which makes it easier for them to feed and breed. Visit wwf.org.uk/adoption/panda/ **£60** - could buy a household an energy-saving stove, which will cut its annual firewood use by half, and help save vital giant panda habitat.

£120 - could buy protective waterproof footwear for a team of five rangers to continue patrolling the Minshan Mountains.

GET STUCK IN!

DISAPPEARING PANDAS

This 10 minute game is a bit like musical chairs. Spread newspaper on the floor - one sheet per person. Explain that the sheets represent the bamboo forest and group members are all giant pandas. Only one panda can stand on each bit of bamboo forest at any one time. The leader is going to call out instructions and the last panda left standing with their bit of forest is the winner!

Pandas can spend a lot of time sitting and eating but they also love to climb trees and tumble around so members should move around the room showing these behaviours. When the leader calls out 'Panda bear is hungry' or 'Panda bear is climbing a tree' everyone jumps to the nearest bit of bamboo forest (newspaper sheet!) and acts out tired or hungry. 'Panda bear is looking for food' means everyone should jump away from a bit of bamboo forest.



WORKING
TOGETHER TO
BUILD A FUTURE
WHERE PEOPLE AND
NATURE THRIVE



WWF-UK, registered charity number 1081247 and registered in Scotland number SC039593.
A company limited by guarantee number 4016725 © 1986 panda symbol and © "WWF"
Registered Trademark of WWF-World Wide Fund For Nature (formerly World Wildlife Fund),
Living Planet Centre, Rufford House, Brewery Road, Woking, Surrey GU21 4LL,
T: +44 (0)1483 426444, E: youth@wwf.org.uk

© John Meehan / WWF

BAMBOO MAKES

Bamboo has many qualities apart from being the food of choice for the giant panda: it grows fast, is super strong, and it's lightweight. Many products which were once made in plastic are now being made in bamboo such as disposable cutlery, toys and kitchen equipment etc. Have a look around your home to see if you have any bamboo products already.

Bamboo is great for practising your camping gadget-making skills. Lightweight camping is good fun but so is being able to make some home comforts - washing rack or mobile phone holder, anyone? What home-from-home comforts would you make with bamboo? Have fun with some bamboo canes and lashing, send us images of your bamboo creations to youth@wwf.org.uk or tweet to [#explore_wwf_uk](https://twitter.com/explore_wwf_uk)

MAKE A PANDA

Pandas are lots of fun to make, try one of the following:

- Make a mask using a paper plate, or make a puppet on a lollypop stick.
- Make a pompom panda.
- Make a panda using a paper cup or a milk bottle.
- Make a pipe cleaner panda to care for - you could attach it to a pen or pencil, rucksack etc and carry around with you.
- Make a panda bookmark and list out what makes these two-tone lovelies so special.
- Make a shoe box habitat featuring a bamboo forest and showing a panda in its element.