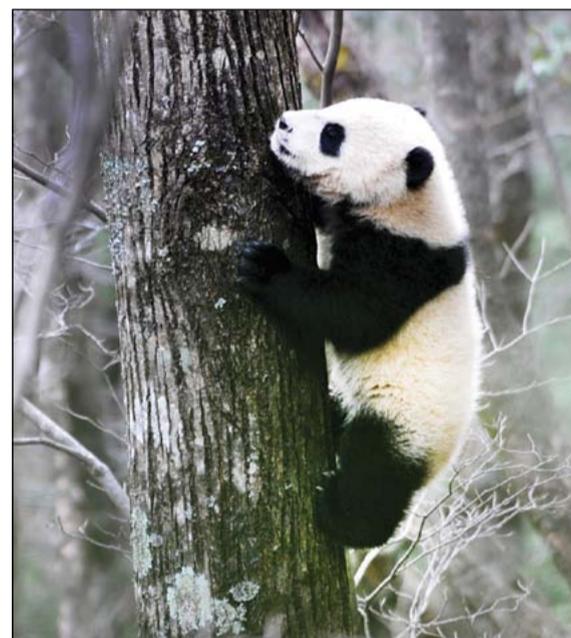
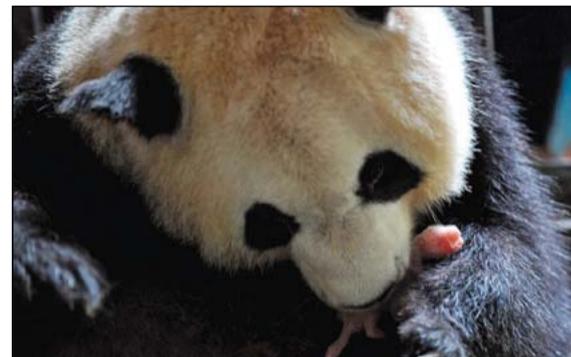


SNAPSHOTS



Breeders and giant panda cubs at the Yaan Bifengxia Base panda base, a part of the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda in Wolong, Southwest China's Sichuan province. XUE YUBIN / XINHUA



Pandas in the wild and at conservation bases.
PHOTOS BY XUE YUBIN AND TAO MING / XINHUA

Huge park planned to protect giant pandas

By LI JING
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A Giant Panda National Park is to be established in China, covering an area three times that of Yellowstone National Park in the United States.

The park proposal has just been approved by the central government and the project is expected to be finished by 2020.

The park will span three provinces — Gansu, Shaanxi and Sichuan — and will cover 27,134 square kilometers, protecting pandas in 67 existing reserves as well as another 8,000 endangered animals and plants.

When it is complete, the pandas, presently isolated on six

mountains in three provinces, will be able to come together and roam freely between their far-flung habitats, helping the endangered animals mingle and enrich their gene pool.

Creation of the park will also involve the relocation of a lot of people. For example, at least 170,000 people in Sichuan will have to move to allow the establishment of the core protection area.

According to Hou Rong, director of the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding in Sichuan, the park will offer residents new homes and jobs. Many could be employed as tourist guides and as construction workers on infrastructure projects, so people and nature will benefit together, he said.

Xinhua contributed to this story.



The Panda Garden in Shaanxi Endangered Animal Rescue Sanctuary, Northwest China.
TAO MING / XINHUA



Volunteers patrol the conservation forests in Wenxian county, Northwest China's Gansu province.
CHEN BIN / XINHUA