

EXPERTS: TOURISM GROWTH HARMS CHINESE PANDA



According to scientists, pandas living in southwest China are losing their habitat due to the tourism growth, road construction, and tree felling, according to a research.

The extent of the panda habitat has dropped by 4.9 percent between 1976 and 2001, while **the average size of each area where the pandas live has declined by 24 percent** during the same period, according to a study published in the latest issue of Nature Ecology & Evolution.

The research conducted by scientists from China and the United States, shows that the construction of roads, logging, earthquakes, and the increasing amount of tourists have contributed to the loss of the pandas' territory.

"Pandas face major threats and challenges due to habitat fragmentation, population isolation, infrastructure development, tourism growth, and climate change," state the researchers.

Currently, 18 of the 30 panda groups living in Southwest China consist of fewer than 10 bears, which means their risk of extinction is high, according to the report.

"When the humans come, pandas leave," said WWF expert in China, Fan Zhiyong, who explained that these animals "are extremely sensitive to any noise."

Only in China the giant panda bear lives in the wild, especially in the mountainous areas of Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu provinces.

In 2014, the number of pandas living in western China was 1,864, another 400 pandas live in captivity around the world.

In September 2016, the International Union for Conservation of Nature removed the giant pandas from the list of endangered species and cataloged them as a "vulnerable" species.

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