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Conservation: WWF Nepal works towards the protection of red pandas in the Sacred Himalayan Landscape. WWF Nepal has supported the Government of Nepal in developing the Red Panda Conservation Action Plan which is now endorsed.

A community-based red panda conservation and monitoring system has been established in Langtang National Park and Buffer Zone whereby local communities are helping in conservation efforts. Community-based anti-poaching units have brought together the local youth who work on a voluntary basis to curb poaching and illegal wildlife trade.

WWF Nepal also supports ecotourism in the region by helping construct red panda trails whereby locally trained guides help promote awareness on red pandas and their conservation amongst tourists and the local community. The red panda conservation program has also partnered with local herders to build their awareness and understanding on red panda conservation as many-a-times, their occupation takes them into prime red panda habitat.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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FACTSHEET

Red Pandas



Common Name: Red Panda

Scientific Name: *Ailurus fulgens*

Status: Endangered Species

Distribution: The Red Panda (*Ailurus fulgens*) is an arboreal mammal occupying a highly specialized niche in the Eastern Himalayas. An endemic species of the Eastern Himalayas, the red panda is a shy mammal having a long, soft, red-brown fur with distinctive black and white markings on its face with long white whiskers and a ringed tail. Its body is about 2 feet long with a 1.5 feet long tail.

The red panda which is also known as the lesser panda weighs about five kilograms. Dwarfed by the black-and-white giant that shares its name, red pandas also have an extra "thumb," which is simply an enlarged bone. The claws are sharp and partly retractable. Red panda have wide teeth and powerful jaws that help them to chew tough bamboo leaves. Their calls include short whistles, squeaks, snorts, and hisses.

Habitat: The red panda shares the high-altitude forest habitat, but has a wider range. Red panda distribution ranges from the mountains of western Nepal into India, Bhutan and northern Myanmar through to the Minshan Mountains and upper Min Valley of Sichuan Province in south-central China (Wei *et al.* 1999, Choudhary 2001, Dorji *et al.*). Red pandas are territorial animals with a restricted home range. The sizes of home ranges vary considerably depending upon the habitat and quality of the forest. With the exception of a small isolated tropical forest population in India, the species is confined to temperate conifer forest and adjacent broadleaf forest (Choudhary 2001) where it specialises on a diet of bamboo (Reid *et al.* 1991, Wei *et al.* 1999).

Diet: About 90% of the red panda's diet comprises bamboo but they also eat many other foods like fruit, acorns, roots, grasses, eggs and small insects, rodents and young birds.

Reproductive cycle: Red pandas give birth in late spring and early summer, typically to one to four young and are able to reproduce at around 18 months of age, and are fully mature at 2–3 years (Robers & Gittleman, 1984). High infant mortality has been recorded in captivity (Yinghong, 1994; Glatston & Leus, 2005). As a result of such low survival rate, red panda population is sensitive to natural and anthropogenic threats.

Life span: Red pandas have an average lifespan of eight years in the wild.

Protection status: It is listed as an Endangered species in IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

Threats: Red pandas are the victims of deforestation. Their natural space is shrinking as more and more forests are destroyed by logging and the spread of agriculture. Besides that livestock grazing, poaching, poor conservation awareness and weak law enforcement all have severe impacts on red pandas conservation in Nepal.

Fun Facts: The red panda is crepuscular- most active at night as well as in the gloaming hours of dawn and dusk. They are shy and solitary except when mating. The red pandas use their long ringed tails as wraparound blankets in the chilly mountain heights.