

All 340 wild pandas in quake area unharmed

A headcount completed two weeks after a 7.0-magnitude earthquake struck southwest China has confirmed all 340 wild giant pandas in the quake zone are unharmed.

Eleven nature reserves – of which ten are dedicated to protecting giant pandas, golden monkeys and their habitats – were affected by the earthquake which struck Jiuzhaigou County in Sichuan Province, on Aug. 8, local government officials said.

The 340 pandas account for 31 percent of the wild panda population in China, they said.

The earthquake triggered landslides in the mountainous region. Official figures show that 24 people were killed, while hundreds were injured.

Bin Junyi, deputy head of Sichuan provincial forestry bureau, said although the pandas survived the quake, their habitat sustained severe damage.

The natural recovery of the panda habitat will take a long time, he said.

Giant pandas live mainly in the mountains of Sichuan and neighboring Shaanxi and Gansu provinces. Their survival is being threatened by habitat loss and very low birthrates.