

China releases panda pair into wild

A pair of giant panda, male and female, were released into the wild on Thursday as part of a program to rebuild the wild panda population.



A pair of giant pandas are released into the wild at Liziping Nature Reserve in Ya'an, southwest China's Sichuan Province, November 23, 2017. [Photo/China.org.cn]

Ba Xi, the male, was born in July 2015, and Ying Xue is just 14 days older. In light snow on Thursday morning, they were released into Liziping Nature Reserve in southwest China's Sichuan Province.

"They are in good condition today. When they saw humans, they ran very fast to the forest rather than seeking for food from them," said Wu Daifu of the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda.

The pair disappeared in the forest equipped with radio monitoring equipment to track them and collect data on how they adapt to a natural environment and integrate with the wild panda population.

According to the center's Li Desheng the center chooses four pregnant pandas each year to lead their cubs in wilderness training.

"Ba Xi and Ying Xue have learned how to find food and water independently and avoid danger in their two-year training," Li said.

They are the second pair to be released into the wild.

In October last year, two female pandas Hua Yan and Zhang Meng, also both

bred in captivity, were released into the reserve. They are currently believed to be in good condition.

The fourth national census on giant pandas in 2015 showed 33 populations in China, 22 with less than 30 pandas.

The International Union for Conservation of Nature reclassified the giant panda species as “vulnerable” rather than “endangered” last year, thanks to decades of protection.

China has 518 giant pandas in captivity. However, the captive stock lacks genetic diversity. China plans to create a giant panda national park and releasing more pandas into the wild.