

Snow leopard cubs spotted in NW China



Two snow leopard cubs have recently been spotted in bushes in the headwater region of the Yangtze, China's longest river. [Photo provided by Shan Shui Conservation Center]

Snow leopard cubs have recently been spotted in bushes in the headwater region of the Yangtze, China's longest river.

The two snow leopard cubs were found by a Tibetan named Tsering Gyatso at a den on a mountain in Chidu county, Yushu Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in northwest China's Qinghai Province Thursday. He reported finding the cubs to the local government.

On Friday morning, scientists rushed to the site. They said the cubs were about two-weeks old and in good health, according to Rinchen Nyima, deputy director of the county's cultural affairs bureau.

The cubs were found in the bushes rather than their traditional habitat in bare rocks on high mountains.

The find, which may indicate that the snow leopard population is increasing or that their habitat has expanded, will help researchers to learn about living habits of the snow leopard in bushes and forests, said Xiao Lingyun with Peking University Center for Nature and Society.

Rinchen Nyima said the mother leopard went back to the den to feed the cubs Saturday morning.

Snow leopards are a Class A protected animal in China and are classified as "endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature. They live in the Himalayas in central and south Asia at an altitude of 2,500 to 4,500 meters. They have been spotted in China's Gansu, Qinghai, Sichuan, Tibet, Yunnan and Xinjiang.

China realizes longest real-time transmission of deep-sea data

Chinese scientists announced Monday they had realized the real-time transmission of deep-sea data for more than 190 straight days, a world record.

During an expedition to the west Pacific at the end of last year, researchers with the Institute of Oceanology under the Chinese Academy of Sciences realized the real-time transmission of deep-sea data after improving the subsurface buoy observation network.

They put a floating body on the sea, which was connected to a submersible buoy. The submersible buoy transmits data to the floating body, which then sends them to a satellite. Researchers then receive the data through the satellite, according to Wang Fan, director of the institute, based in Qingdao, eastern China's Shandong Province.

The real-time deep-sea data includes the condition of the subsurface buoy, the flowing speed, direction and pressure of seawater.

"Real-time transmission of deep-sea data provides important technical support for research on ocean environment and global climate," Wang said, adding that the data could enhance the precision in ocean climate and environment forecasts.

The previous world record for real-time transmission of deepwater data was about 90 days, according to the institute.

China's two supercomputers still world's fastest



China's Sunway TaihuLight [File Photo]

China's Sunway TaihuLight and Tianhe-2 are still the world's fastest and second fastest machines, but America's Titan was squeezed into fourth place by an upgraded Swiss system, according to the latest edition of the semiannual TOP500 list of supercomputers released Monday.

China's homegrown supercomputers

Sunway TaihuLight, described by the TOP500 list as "far and away the most powerful number-cruncher on the planet," maintained the lead since last June, when it dethroned Tianhe-2, the former champion for the previous three consecutive years.

It means that a Chinese supercomputer has topped the rankings maintained by researchers in the United States and Germany for nine times in a row.

What's more, Sunway TaihuLight, with a performance of 93 petaflops, was built entirely using processors designed and made in China.

"It highlights China's ability to conduct independent research in the supercomputing field," Haohuan Fu, deputy director of the National Supercomputing Center, where Sunway TaihuLight was installed, told Xinhua.

"China is simultaneously developing hardware and software technologies of supercomputers," Fu said. "It is expected that rapid development in homegrown hardware technologies, supported by homegrown software, will lead to a stronger research and engineering test capacity in many fields, thus promoting an industrial upgrading and, eventually, a sustainable development of China's homegrown supercomputing industry."

Tianhe-2, capable of performing 33.9 petaflops, was based on Intel chips, something banned by the U.S. government from selling to four supercomputing institutions in China since 2015.

Swiss system “really a surprise”

In the latest rankings, the new number three supercomputer is the upgraded Piz Daint, a system installed at the Swiss National Supercomputing Center.

Its current performance of 19.6 petaflops pushed Titan, a machine installed at the U.S. Oak Ridge National Laboratory, into fourth place. Titan’s performance of 17.6 petaflops has remained constant since it was installed in 2012.

“This is the second time in the 24-year history of the TOP500 list that the United States has failed to secure any of the top three positions,” the TOP500 organizers said in a statement.

The only other time this occurred was in November 1996, when three Japanese systems captured the top three spots.

“Nevertheless, the U.S. still claims five of the top 10 supercomputers, which is more than any other nation,” they said.

Fu called the upgraded Swiss system “really a surprise,” saying that “it reflects the increased investment in large-scale supercomputers in Europe.”

America’s strong strength

“Although the U.S. dropped out of the top three, it still has strong strength in high performance computing,” Fu told Xinhua. “If everything goes well, we could see two U.S. systems with a performance of 200 to 300 petaflops in the next rankings at the end of the year.”

Just days before the TOP500 announcement, the U.S. Department of Energy said it has awarded AMD, Cray, HP Enterprise, IBM, Intel and NVIDIA a total of 258 million U.S. dollars in funding to accelerate the development of next-generation supercomputers.

“Continued U.S. leadership in high performance computing is essential to our security, prosperity, and economic competitiveness as a nation,” U.S. Secretary of Energy Rick Perry said in a recent statement.

The immediate goal of the United States is to develop at least one exascale-capable system by 2021, which will be at least 10 times faster than China’s Sunway TaihuLight.

“Global competition for this technological dominance is fierce,” the U.S. Department of Energy asserted. “However, the U.S. retains global leadership in the actual application of high performance computing to national security, industry, and science.”

In addition, the latest list showed that the United States leads the pack in

the total number of TOP500 systems, with 169, while China is a close second with 160. Both countries lost share compared to six months ago, when they each claimed 171 systems.

Besides the United States and China, the most well-represented countries on the list are Japan, with 33 supercomputers, Germany, with 28, France, with 18, and Britain, with 17.

Overall, aggregate performance on the TOP500 rose to 749 petaflops, a 32 percent jump from a year ago.

Such an increase, though, is well below the list's historical growth rate of about 185 percent per year, said the organizers.

"The slower growth in list performance is a trend that began in 2013, and has shown no signs of reversal," they said.

When it comes to companies making these systems, the U.S.-based Hewlett-Packard Enterprise claims the number one spot with 143 supercomputers. China's Lenovo is the second most popular vendor, with 88 systems, and Cray is in third place, with 57.

There are three other Chinese companies in the vendor list: Sugon (No. 4 with 44 systems), Inspur (No. 6 with 20 systems) and Huawei (No. 7 with 19 systems).

The Top500 list is considered one of the most authoritative rankings of the world's supercomputers. It is compiled on the basis of the machines' performance on the Linpack benchmark by experts from the United States and Germany.

[China's two supercomputers still world's fastest](#)



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CIPG, BFSU to boost cross-cultural communication



Zhang Fuhai, president of CIPG, addresses the signing ceremony for cooperation between CIPG and BFSU. [Photo by Zhao Na/China.org.cn]

China International Publishing Group (CIPG) is seeking to extend its influence in the international cultural arena in partnership with Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU), one of China's most prestigious linguistic schools.

The two sides, hoping to develop a close relationship designed to enhance China's voice in the international community, signed an agreement in Beijing on July 16.

According to Zhang Fuhai, president of CIPG, the two organizations may have more to cooperate.

He said that CIPG is the oldest and largest professional cross-cultural communication institute in the country, while BFSU is an eminent school with a long history and rich language resources among domestic universities.

"Despite their different functions, the two organizations should make full use of their advantages to jointly assume responsibility to present China's stories, voices and images and enhance China's discourse power and influence in the international community," Zhang said.

With courses covering 84 foreign languages, BFSU enjoys high prestige rarely surpassed by domestic universities in terms of size and diversity of linguistic education, particularly those of less-widely used languages, said Peng Long, president of BFSU.

Regarding cooperation with CIPG, Peng said, "It is an historic moment [in which] we are both inspired and encouraged."

In addition to conventional language education, BFSU has explored multi-disciplinary majors, such as international journalism, business and law. Besides, it has set up 22 Confucius Institutes abroad.

CIPG Vice President Wang Gangyi said, "We are confident in pressing ahead with cooperative programs one after another through a pragmatic approach." Wang is also one of the initiators of the cooperation.

The two sides are dedicated to building personnel pools of those with a good command of foreign languages as well as competent in journalism and new media technologies.

The exchange, focusing on faculty, students and CIPG staff in the form of internships, continued education and symposiums, such as research for handling diverse cultures under the Belt and Road Initiative, will complement the first-hand experience of translation via the China Academy of Translation.