



The Red Panda — A

Rare Climber Fighting to Survive

Reading Worksheet — Level F | [tahricteaches.com](https://www.tahricteaches.com)

The red panda is a **rare**, cat-sized mammal **native** to the mountain **forests** of the eastern Himalayas and southwestern China. Unlike its much larger and more famous relative, the giant panda, the red panda is only distantly related and now sits in a family of its own. With reddish-brown fur, a long bushy tail, and sharp, curved claws built for gripping branches, it is superbly adapted to a life spent high above the forest floor. It thrives in a cool, misty **climate** at high elevations, where thick bamboo groves provide both food and shelter throughout the year.

Although it looks more like a raccoon than a panda, the red panda shares one striking habit with its larger cousin: a diet built almost entirely around **bamboo**. Red pandas spend most of their waking hours searching for tender bamboo shoots and leaves, supplementing this diet with fruit, insects, and small eggs when available. Each animal defends its own **territory**, marking trees and rocks with scent to warn other red pandas to stay away.

Conservationists estimate that fewer than 10,000 red pandas remain in the wild, and their **population** continues to shrink as mountain **forests** are cleared for farming, roads, and logging. Because red pandas depend so heavily on a narrow **region** of bamboo forest, even small changes to their environment can make it difficult for them to find enough food or safe places to raise their young.

Wildlife organizations across China, Nepal, Bhutan, and India now work together to **protect** red panda habitat, creating reserves where logging and farming are limited. Breeding programs in zoos around the world also help red pandas **survive** by maintaining genetically healthy populations that could one day be reintroduced into the wild. These programs have taught scientists a great deal about the species' behavior, health, and needs.

Climate change adds another layer of difficulty, since shifting temperatures and rainfall patterns can change where bamboo is able to grow, forcing red pandas into smaller and smaller pockets of **forest**. Protecting this **rare** animal ultimately means protecting an entire mountain ecosystem — one that supports countless other **native** plants and animals sharing the same fragile **territory**.

A. Vocabulary

1. rare _____

a. the usual weather conditions of a place over time

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|--------------------|---|
| 2. native ____ | b. an area of land that an animal claims and defends as its own |
| 3. forest ____ | c. to continue to live or exist, especially through difficulty |
| 4. climate ____ | d. a particular area of a country or the world |
| 5. bamboo ____ | e. not found or seen very often |
| 6. territory ____ | f. originally living or growing in a particular place |
| 7. population ____ | g. a large area covered with trees |
| 8. region ____ | h. a tall, fast-growing plant with hollow, woody stems |
| 9. protect ____ | i. the total number of a kind of animal living in a place |
| 10. survive ____ | j. to keep someone or something safe from harm |



B. True or False

1. The red panda is native to the eastern Himalayas and southwestern China. ____
2. The red panda is closely related to the giant panda. ____
3. Red pandas live in a hot, dry climate at low elevations. ____
4. A red panda's diet is built almost entirely around bamboo. ____
5. Red pandas mark their territory with scent. ____
6. Conservationists believe there are millions of red pandas left in the wild. ____
7. Logging and farming have reduced the forest where red pandas live. ____
8. Zoo breeding programs help red pandas survive as a species. ____
9. Climate change has no effect on where bamboo can grow. ____



C. Fill in the Blanks

Word Bank: native, bamboo, population, protect, survive

1. The red panda is _____ to the mountain forests of the Himalayas and southwestern China.
2. A red panda's diet is built almost entirely around _____.
3. The red panda's wild _____ continues to shrink as forests are cleared.
4. Wildlife organizations work together to _____ red panda habitat.
5. Breeding programs in zoos help red pandas _____ as a species.

D. Comprehension Questions

1. Where is the red panda native to, and how is it related to the giant panda?
2. What does a red panda eat, and how does it defend its territory?
3. Why is the red panda's wild population shrinking?
4. What are conservationists and zoos doing to help red pandas survive?
5. How does climate change add to the threats red pandas already face?

E. Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think an animal that depends on one type of food, like bamboo, is more vulnerable to extinction?
2. What responsibility, if any, do you think wealthier countries have in helping protect rare animals like the red panda?
3. The article says protecting the red panda means protecting an entire ecosystem. Why might protecting one species help many others?





Answer Key

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A. Vocabulary: 1-e, 2-f, 3-g, 4-a, 5-h, 6-b, 7-i, 8-d, 9-j, 10-c

B. True/False: 1-T, 2-F, 3-F, 4-T, 5-T, 6-F, 7-T, 8-T, 9-F

C. Fill Blanks: 1-native, 2-bamboo, 3-population, 4-protect, 5-survive

D. Comprehension:

1. The red panda is native to the mountain forests of the eastern Himalayas and southwestern China. It is only distantly related to the giant panda and belongs to its own family.
2. A red panda eats mostly bamboo shoots and leaves, along with fruit, insects, and small eggs. It defends its territory by marking trees and rocks with scent.
3. The red panda's wild population is shrinking because mountain forests are being cleared for farming, roads, and logging, leaving less bamboo forest for the species to live in.
4. Conservationists in China, Nepal, Bhutan, and India are protecting red panda habitat through reserves, while zoos run breeding programs that maintain healthy populations for possible reintroduction to the wild.
5. Climate change can shift temperature and rainfall patterns, changing where bamboo is able to grow and forcing red pandas into smaller, more fragile pockets of forest.