

## The Red Panda

There are less than 10,000 Red Pandas left in the wild. It is one of the rarest mammals in the world. It is also called Fire Cat, Fire Fox and Lesser Panda. They live in forests high up in the mountains of the eastern Himalayas and southwestern China. They are great tree climbers. They stay mostly in the trees.

They are mammals. There are two species of Red Panda and they belong to the Ailuridae family. They are the only member of this family. Sometimes people think they are related to the Giant Panda or to the raccoon but they are not.

It has reddish brown fur, a black belly and legs and white markings on its snout, cheeks and ears. It has a bushy tail with six rings which it uses as a blanket to wrap around itself when it is cold. It is the size of a house cat.

It mostly eats bamboo leaves but it can eat fruit, flowers, insects, bird eggs and lizards. When it isn't eating it is sleeping.

Its predator is the leopard but its worst enemy is mankind. Human activity is threatening the species with extinction. Poachers hunt and kill it for its fur. Deforestation and climate change is causing the loss of its habitat. If we don't protect it, sadly this beautiful animal will disappear forever.

