

PANDAS

Giant pandas are members of the bear family, they are similar to other bears in their general looks and the way they walk and climb. They can grow to around 150 centimetres tall and weigh between 100-150 kilograms.

Giant pandas are only about the size of a small human fist at birth, and they're hairless and helpless. The panda mother gives great care to her tiny cub, usually cradling it in one paw and holding it close to her chest. For around a week after the cub is born, the mother does not leave the den, not even to eat or drink.



FEEDING PATTERNS

Bamboo is the most important plant in a giant panda's life. They spend at least 12 hours each day eating bamboo. Pandas grasp bamboo stalks with their five fingers and a special wrist bone. They use their teeth to peel off the tough outer layers of the stalk to reveal the soft inner tissue. They will also eat the leaves of a bamboo stalk. Overall, bamboo is not very nutritious. The shoots and leaves are the most valuable parts of the plants, so that's what a well-fed panda concentrates on eating. To stay healthy, they have to eat a lot, up to 15 percent of their body weight in 12 hours, which means they have to eat very fast. Occasionally they eat other vegetation, fish, or small animals, but bamboo accounts for 99 percent of their diets.



HABITAT

They live in the dense bamboo forests in the misty, rainy mountains of south-western China. They are one of the world's rarest mammals: the giant panda, also called the panda has a wild population of around 1,000.

Pandas are shy creatures; they don't venture into areas where people live. This restricts pandas to very limited areas. As people continue to farm, log, and develop land higher and higher up the mountain slopes, the pandas' habitat continues to shrink which has seen a huge decrease in their numbers.



BREEDING

Giant pandas may live to be up to 30 years old in captivity. After the age of six, female giant pandas begin to have cubs. Female pandas give birth to one or two cubs every two years. A cub nurses for about four months and then it will begin to nibble on bamboo. By the age of six months, the cub is no longer nursed by its mother.

THEY SEEM PRETTY QUIET, BUT GIANT PANDAS CAN BLEAT, ROAR, GROWL, AND HONK.

In addition to 1,000 giant pandas in the wild, there are around 127 in captivity. Giant pandas live in zoos in China, the United States, Mexico, Japan, Germany, and North Korea.

The Chinese name for panda is *daxiongmao*, which means "large bear-cat."

They are classified as an endangered species.

