



GIANT PANDA



Giant pandas, universally admired for their distinctive eyes and seemingly gentle demeanour. They are also one of the rarest and most vulnerable bears in the world.

Read on to discover more interesting facts about them

WHERE I LIVE

Giant pandas inhabit temperate montane forests in south-western China. Although, two thirds of all wild pandas now live in nature reserves, they are still, however, classified as a vulnerable species. www.wwf.org.uk/wildlife/giant_panda/



CHARACTERISTICS

- Giant pandas have a larger head and shorter legs than most bears. They have a distinctive black and white coat, and mostly white body and belly, contrasting sharply with black ears, black limbs and shoulders, and black patches over their eyes.
- They have large muscular jaws, while their teeth are wider and flatter than those of other bears, allowing them to grind bamboo.
- Giant pandas weigh 75 -125kg.
- They are not very active as most of their time is spent eating and sleeping, but they can climb using their muscly forearms. From 3-5 months of age baby pandas walk alongside their mums but can occasionally be seen piggy backing too!

MY FAMILY

The female giant panda usually gives birth to one, sometimes two cubs between July and September, although usually only one cub survives. Cubs are helpless after birth for the first few weeks life and their mother cares for them in a den located in the base of a hollow tree or in a cave. They remain dependent on their mother until they are around 18 months old. As an adults they lead a solitary lifestyle, rarely meeting other pandas unless it's the mating season.



VIDEO

Watch footage of pandas

- youtube.com/watch?v=GRcihHbq010
- youtube.com/watch?v=R_8JAU9n2SU
- arkive.org/giant-panda/ailuropoda-melanoleuca/video-06.html
- arkive.org/giant-panda/ailuropoda-melanoleuca/video-08a.html

DID YOU KNOW

Giant pandas have a 'thumb', it's actually a modified wrist bone that enables them to grasp bamboo stalks.

FEEDING

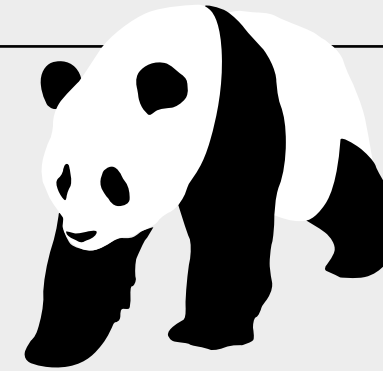
- A giant pandas diet is extremely specialised, compared to other bears.
- They mainly eat bamboo, which makes up 99% of their diet but they are really omnivores and can sometimes eat meat other predators leave!
- Giant pandas have the digestive system of a carnivore and are only able to digest a small proportion of the bamboo they eat, so they need to consume a great deal of food – about 38kg of bamboo shoots per day.

DID YOU KNOW

Although giant pandas are good swimmers and excellent tree climbers, they spend most of my time feeding – about 14 hours a day!

CLASSIFICATION

Giant pandas are classified as **Vulnerable** on the IUCN Red List. After years of being endangered, their population is now increasing in the wild.



STATUS

- Habitat loss is the greatest cause of the decline of my population. Large areas of China's natural forest have been cleared for agriculture, timber and firewood, to meet the needs of the large and growing human population.
- Roads and railways are increasingly cutting through the forest, which isolates panda populations and prevents us from breeding and finding new sources of food.
- Habitat is also affected by livestock grazing and people collecting medicinal herbs and harvesting bamboo – their main source of food.
- There are around 1,860 pandas remaining in the wild and conservation efforts seek to grow this number.
- Although poaching has been a problem in the past, the introduction of high penalties for poaching has reduced it to levels which are no longer believed to pose a significant threat to giant pandas.