

Pandas: Cuddliest of all Bears

Beware: Dangerously Cute Exercise

The giant panda has a distinctive *white* head with *black* eye patches, ears and shoulders. Unlike other bear species, giant pandas are *herbivorous* spending up to 12 hours a day chewing bamboo shoots and roots. Because of poaching and habitat loss, they are extremely *rare*, occurring in small populations in the bamboo forests of China. Despite being the subject of major international conservation efforts, wild populations of giant pandas may not be enough to save this species.

Giant pandas *live* in the bamboo forests of China for millions of years and have been honored by the Chinese for a very long time. In fact, giant pandas *have appeared* in Chinese art for thousands of years. Because the giant panda is considered a national treasure in China, it is protected by law so that it *does not become* extinct.

Although giant pandas have long been known to the Chinese, they *have* a recent discovery for people living outside of China. The first westerner to observe a live giant panda in the wild was a German zoologist named Hugo Weigold. In 1916, he *bought* a cub while he was on expedition.

In the wild, giant pandas *spend* most of their time resting, eating, or looking for food. Unlike other bear species, giant pandas do not hibernate during the winter months. They also *build* permanent dens. Instead, they shelter in caves and trees.

Pandas are good climbers. They *can* also swim, though they spend most of their time on land. Although they might seem pretty quiet, giant pandas make a lot of growling and honking sounds.

Today, giant pandas are at risk of becoming extinct. Only about 1,000 giant pandas are left in the wild. All of these *inhabit* a small area in the bamboo forests of China. About 150 live in captivity. This is why the giant panda *is listed* as endangered in the World Conservation Union's Red List of Threatened Animals. It is one of the most severely *endangered* species in the world.

Now answer the following questions.



1- Why are the giant pandas unlike the bear species?

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2- Where do the giant pandas live?

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3- Why did the giant panda appear in Chinese art?

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4- What is the name of the zoologist who observed a live giant panda in the wild?

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5- How do the giant pandas spend their time?

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