

## Giant Panda Update



photo by Connor Mallon/Smithsonian's National Zoo

Last August, the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., celebrated an exciting event: the birth of Bei Bei (bay-bay), a male giant panda cub. He was just introduced to visitors in January. This week, we look in on Bei Bei and find out more about giant pandas.

### Pandas in danger

The first pandas lived in the mountains and on the plains of China. Today, with more people in those areas, wild pandas are found only in the mountains.

In the wild, pandas eat only **bamboo**, a tall, woody grass. In the 1980s in China, two species of bamboo temporarily died off at the same time. Pandas didn't have enough to eat, so they began to come into nearby villages. Some of these starving pandas were rescued, and many of them became part of the panda conservation program in China.

Today, **conservation**, or protection, groups in the United States, China and other countries are working together to make sure pandas have a place to live and plenty to eat.

### Pandas in the U.S.

The first pandas to arrive in the United States were presented as a gift from China. Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing arrived at the Smithsonian's National Zoo in 1972. Having the pandas here gave researchers a chance to study their behavior and how they reproduce.

In December 2000, the National Zoo received another pair of giant pandas, Mei Xiang (may-SHONG) and Tian Tian (t-YEN t-YEN). They are

on loan from the Chinese government. The pair will live at the National Zoo through the end of 2020.

This long visit gives researchers time to study how to restore their habitats, which diseases threaten them, and how to make panda reproduction more successful.

### Meet Bei Bei

Aug. 22, 2015, was a special day at the Smithsonian's National Zoo.

Mei Xiang, a 17-year-old giant panda born in China, gave birth to Bei Bei, her third surviving cub. Bao Bao (bow-bow), Bei Bei's older sister, will return to China when she is 4 years old. Tai Shan (tie-SHON), who is now 10, already has been returned to China.

Bei Bei was named in September, when first lady Michelle Obama and the first lady of the People's Republic of China, Peng Liyuan, announced his name.



photo by Amy Enckelmeyer/Smithsonian's National Zoo

Bei Bei is examined by a veterinarian at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C., in December.



photo by Connor Mallon/Smithsonian's National Zoo

Mei Xiang, shown here, kept her cub close to her side in her den for weeks after he was born. She didn't leave the den until nine days after giving birth!

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### Barely bears?

Yes, giant pandas are bears. But they are not closely related to other bears. Scientists have discovered some big differences between them:

- Pandas don't move around much.
- A panda's range is smaller than other bears'.
- Pandas are almost purely vegetarian.

### Up in the trees

Giant pandas are great climbers. Adults spend little time climbing, but a cub will sit in a tree for hours each day while its mother is out finding food.



photo courtesy Smithsonian's National Zoo

Bao Bao, Bei Bei's older sister, plays in a tree on her first birthday.

Pandas the wild live to be about 15 years old. Mother pandas will have one or two cubs at a time, and they may give birth only three or four times in their lives.

Bei Bei was one of a set of twins. Unfortunately, the other twin died after only four days.

## Resources



### On the Web:

- [nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/GiantPandas](http://nationalzoo.si.edu/Animals/GiantPandas)
- [s.si.edu/1P98G05](http://s.si.edu/1P98G05)

### At the library:

- "National Geographic Readers: Pandas" by Anne Schreiber
- "A Book for Kids About Pandas: The Giant Panda Bear" by Frances York
- "A Baby Panda Is Born" by Kristin Ostby

## Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of giant pandas are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



BAMBOO, BEAR, BEI BEI,	X G N O I T A V R E S N O C U
BIRTH, CHINA, CLIMB,	T R E E R D E R E G N A D N E
CONSERVATION, CUB,	B B C H C R A E S E R U M G H
DEN, ENDANGERED,	M E H O O Z J Y B H V D O O F
FOOD, GIANT, GIFT, LIST,	I I I O K D L I W Z T N A I G
MOUNTAINS, NAME,	L B N O S P E C I E S R J I R
PANDA, RESEARCH,	C E A B B E A R Z A D N I W T
SPECIES, TREE, TWIN,	I I B M D E M A N T S I L B O
WILD, ZOO.	N E D A D N A P I Y C G I F T
	C U B B U S N I A T N U O M S

## Cook's Corner

### Baked Goat Cheese With Pistachios

#### You'll need:

- 6 ounces soft goat cheese (regular or herb)
- 1 tablespoon minced fresh chives
- 1/2 teaspoon dried oregano

- 1/4 cup chopped pistachios
- 2 cups mini pretzel twists



\* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

#### What to do:

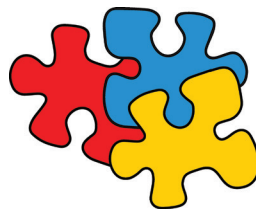
1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. In a small bowl, combine goat cheese, chives and oregano. Mix until well-blended. Spoon mixture into a 6- or 8-inch **ramekin**\* and top with pistachios.
3. Bake for 8 to 10 minutes, until goat cheese is golden brown on top.
4. Serve goat cheese with pretzels for dipping. Serves 4.

\* A ramekin is a round baking dish with tall sides.

Adapted from "The Robin Takes 5 Cookbook for Busy Families" with permission from Andrews McMeel Publishing (andrewsmcmeel.com).

## Puzzling

Unscramble the words below that remind us of animal conservation.



tdysu \_\_\_\_\_

dwli \_\_\_\_\_

vuivesr \_\_\_\_\_

erceus \_\_\_\_\_

Answers: study, wild, survive, rescue.

## Mini Jokes



- Melinda:** What is black and white, black and white, and black and white?
- Merry:** A panda bear rolling down the mountain!

## Eco Note



Researchers from Kenya and Zimbabwe say that stink bugs could be harvested and eaten. The bugs they collected in Zimbabwean forests were "high in protein, fatty acids and anti-inflammatory chemicals such as flavonoid content." The bugs could help fight malnutrition and hunger in some of Africa's poorest communities.

adapted with permission from Earthweek.com

## For later:

Look in your newspaper for stories about endangered animals.

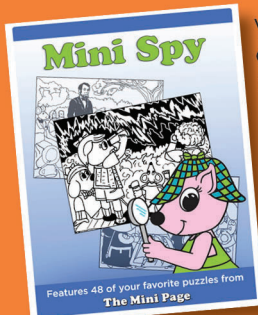
## Teachers:

For standards-based activities to accompany this feature, visit: [bbs.amuniversal.com/teaching\\_guides.html](http://bbs.amuniversal.com/teaching_guides.html)

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