



NEWS

from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

August 26, 1998

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE DIRECTOR ANNOUNCES NEW PANDA CONSERVATION POLICY, LIFTS IMPORT PERMIT PROCESSING MORATORIUM

At a press conference held today at the San Diego Zoo, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Director Jamie Rappaport Clark announced a new policy that encourages conservation of giant pandas through long-term loans. The new policy also lifts the moratorium on processing of live panda import permit applications, which has been in place since December 1993. Since that time, the Service has evaluated its existing policy and considered the potential impact of import permits on the survival of the giant panda in the wild.

The new policy clarifies the requirements for import permits for organizations carrying out work directly related to the conservation of wild panda populations in China and enhances the sustainability of the captive population in that country.

"The panda is unique," said Clark. "It is the only species that is both critically endangered--with fewer than 1,000 animals remaining in the wild--and at the same time, so beloved that it is capable of generating substantial profit when displayed. Due to the precarious level of panda populations, we want to make sure that research findings are shared quickly. And because panda loans can involve substantial revenues, we need to ensure that funds generated as a result of their import into this country go directly to panda conservation projects in China."

To develop a policy that would address this special circumstance, Service biologists consulted with interested individuals and various conservation organizations including zoos in this country and abroad in a coordinated panda conservation effort. In addition, the Service and its sister agencies in China exchanged information and worked together to ensure that all pandas imported into the U.S. would contribute to the health of wild populations in China.

Pandas are listed as endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act and on Appendix I of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Under these two measures, the Service has to make the following determinations before it can issue a permit:

- o the import cannot be for primarily commercial purposes;
- o the purpose for the import must not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild;

- o the importer must have facilities and the expertise to care for the panda;
- o the import must enhance the survival or propagation of the species as outlined under the ESA, meaning that scientific research or the propagation of the species must benefit wild pandas; and
- o the import must not jeopardize the continued existence of giant panda populations in the wild.

The Service imposed the moratorium on panda imports due to concerns about short-term exhibition loans and how the demand for such loans might impact pandas in the wild. In developing the policy announced today, the Service recognized that the use of pandas for short-term exhibition could detract from the overall panda conservation effort because institutions might consider using resources for short-term exhibition rather than research and enhancement of wild populations. Under the new policy, it is unlikely that the Service would issue an import permit solely for short-term exhibition purposes.

The Service's Office of Management Authority (OMA) will review applications and issue permits for giant panda imports when appropriate. This office, part of the Service's International Affairs Program, carries out a variety of responsibilities under some 40 treaties, statutes, and agreements. These programs exemplify the Service's commitment to and involvement in the conservation of species and their habitats worldwide. The Service also provides training and capacity-building on the ground in a number of other nations to help conserve wildlife.

For a permit application, copy of the policy, or more information on giant panda imports, see the OMA home page on Internet at <http://www.fws.gov/r9dia/index.html>; write U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Office of Management Authority, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 700, Arlington, VA 22203; phone 703-358-2104 or 1-800-358-2104; or fax 703-358-2281.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is the principal Federal agency responsible for conserving, protecting, and enhancing fish and wildlife and their habitats for the continuing benefit of the American people. The Service manages the 93-million-acre National Wildlife Refuge System comprised of more than 500 national wildlife refuges, thousands of small wetlands, and other special management areas. It also operates 66 national fish hatcheries and 78 ecological services field stations. The agency enforces Federal wildlife laws, administers the Endangered Species Act, manages migratory bird populations, restores nationally significant fisheries, conserves and restores wildlife habitat such as wetlands, and helps foreign governments with their conservation efforts.



Giant Panda Policy:

Questions & Answers



Why have a policy just for pandas?

Giant pandas (*Ailuropoda melanoleuca*) are protected by the U.S. Endangered Species Act (ESA) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). Any import requires the Fish and Wildlife Service to issue a permit under these wildlife measures.

The giant panda is unique. It is highly endangered, with probably fewer than 1,000 animals in the wild, extremely popular with the public worldwide, and capable of generating substantial profit when displayed. Because of this, giant panda imports have had a controversial history. Conservationists fear humans will "love the panda to death."

What does the policy cover?

The policy clarifies the information considered in making permit findings under CITES and the ESA, and assists persons in filing a complete application for panda import, export, re-export, take, or interstate or foreign commerce. The policy also provides guidance to assist Service decision-makers and staff in

reviewing panda permit applications to ensure that permit issuance criteria have been addressed. The policy discusses the purposes for which a permit can be issued and when exhibition of pandas is allowed. It provides guidance to ensure that the import will not contribute to the removal of pandas from the wild, and guidance on the use of funds associated with a panda transfer.

How does the policy benefit pandas?

The primary goal is to ensure that permitted activities will contribute to the survival and recovery of the wild panda population. The Service will consider whether the panda transfer is part of a coordinated panda conservation effort that supports priority projects in China's National Plan, National Survey, or Captive Breeding Plan. The Service will also consider whether the facility holding pandas will use funds associated with the panda loan (loan money, net profit, or fund raising money) to support these priority projects, and whether a significant portion will be used for conservation of pandas in the wild.

How does this policy differ from the previous policy?

The previous 1991 policy focused on short-term loans. It allowed the import of pandas of certain ages for short-term exhibition loans as long as the funds committed in the loan agreement were used for projects in China's National Plan designed primarily to benefit pandas. Any net profit made by the exhibition of pandas was to be used for conservation of pandas, other endangered species, and/or the general conservation of other wildlife.

The new policy emphasizes coordination among organizations interested in the conservation of giant pandas. It focuses more on long term loans. It expands the type of projects that can be funded to include ones in China's plans for both wild and captive pandas. The policy considers age as it relates to accomplishing the purpose of the import. It gives guidance to ensure that panda imports do not contribute to the removal of pandas from the wild. It also considers whether net profits will be used for panda conservation, and whether a significant portion will be used for pandas in the wild.



Giant Panda Policy: Questions & Answers

The media has reported on cloning issues. Where does this fit in?

It doesn't. There are a number of techniques available to manage wildlife populations, and these are used as appropriate. At the present time, cloning is not a wildlife management tool. It is certainly not a replacement for wildlife conservation. Rather, it is a new scientific break-through, and emphasizing cloning as a solution puts the focus on technology rather than wildlife conservation.

What are the purposes and circumstances under which a permit can be issued?

- ◆ Under the ESA, permits can be issued:
 - ◆ For scientific research if the research is directly linked and will contribute to the recovery of pandas in the wild.
 - ◆ For a combination of captive breeding and scientific research—the permit review will consider whether the captive breeding will be coordinated through the American Zoo and Aquarium Association's Species Survival Plan for giant pandas (or a similar

plan) and with China's Captive Breeding Plan; the research component must benefit panda conservation and may be focused on the captive population.

- ◆ Before the Service can issue a permit, it must make the following findings under CITES and the ESA:
 - ◆ the import cannot be for primarily commercial purposes ;
 - ◆ the purpose of the import must not be detrimental to the survival of the species in the wild;
 - ◆ the importer must have facilities and expertise to care for the pandas;
 - ◆ the purpose of the import must be consistent with the ESA (i.e., for scientific research or for the enhancement of the survival or propagation of the species— purposes which benefit the panda in the wild); and
 - ◆ the import must not jeopardize panda populations in the wild.

How is accountability determined?

Since funding is critical to panda conservation in China, the Service will consider whether the money is being used for pandas. Also, under CITES, the applicant must show that the import is not for primarily commercial purposes. Therefore, in panda permit applications, an applicant should outline how it will

calculate any profit and present a plan to monitor fund disbursement. An annual accounting report that clearly shows whether a net profit was made and how it was determined, including how the panda money sent to China was specifically used, will serve as a permittee's follow-up once a permit is issued. The loan money should go to China in installments to assist in monitoring the progress with panda conservation projects in China as outlined in the loan agreement.

Where do I apply for a permit or get more information?

For a permit application, copy of the policy, or more information on giant panda imports contact: Office of Management Authority, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, 4401 N. Fairfax Drive, Room 700, Arlington, VA 22203, telephone 703-358-2104 or 1-800-358-2104, fax 703-358-2281.





Giant Panda

(*Ailuropoda melanolenca*)



What animal is black and white and loved all over the world? If you guessed the giant panda, you're right! The giant panda is also known as the panda bear, bamboo bear, or in Chinese as *Daxiongmao*, the "large bear cat." In fact, its scientific name means "black and white cat-footed animal."

Giant pandas are found only in the mountains of central China — in small isolated areas of the north and central portions of the Sichuan Province, in the mountains bordering the southernmost part of Gansu Province and in the Qinling Mountains of the Shaanxi Province.

Giant pandas live in dense bamboo and coniferous forests at altitudes of 5,000 to 10,000 feet. The mountains are shrouded in heavy clouds with torrential rains or dense mist throughout the year.

Giant pandas have existed since the Pleistocene Era (about 600,000 years ago), when their geographic range extended throughout southern China. Fossil remains also have been found in present-day Burma.

Giant pandas are bear-like in shape with striking black and white markings. The ears, eye patches, legs and shoulder band are black; the rest of the body is whitish. They have thick, woolly coats to insulate them from the cold. Adults

are four to six feet long and may weigh up to 350 pounds — about the same size as the American black bear. However, unlike the black bear, giant pandas do not hibernate and cannot walk on their hind legs.

The giant panda has unique front paws — one of the wrist bones is enlarged and elongated and is used like a thumb, enabling the giant panda to grasp stalks of bamboo. They also have very powerful jaws and teeth to crush bamboo. While bamboo stalks and roots make up about 95 percent of its diet, the giant panda also feeds on gentians, irises, crocuses, fish, and occasionally small rodents. It must eat 20 to 40 pounds of food each day to survive, and spends 10 to 16 hours a day feeding.

The giant panda reaches breeding maturity between four and ten years of age. Mating usually takes place in the spring, and three to five months later, one or two cubs weighing three to five ounces each is born in a sheltered den. Usually only one cub survives. The eyes open at 1 ½ to two months and the cub becomes mobile at approximately three months of age. At twelve months the cub becomes totally independent. While their average life span in the wild is about fifteen years, giant pandas in captivity have been known to live well into their twenties.

Scientists have debated for more than a century whether giant pandas belong to the bear family, the raccoon family or a separate family of their own. This is because the giant panda and its cousin, the lesser or red panda, share many characteristics with both bears and raccoons. Recent DNA analysis indicates that giant pandas are more closely related to bears and red pandas are more closely related to raccoons. Accordingly, giant pandas are categorized in the bear family while red pandas are categorized in the raccoon family.

In 1869, a French missionary and naturalist named Pere Armand David was the first European to describe the giant panda. In 1936, clothing designer Ruth Harkness brought the first live giant panda, named Su-Lin, out of China and to the West. Su-Lin lived at Chicago's Brookfield Zoo and was a celebrity until he died in 1938. Today, 124 giant pandas are found in Chinese zoos. Only about 20 giant pandas live in zoos outside of China. In 1980, the first giant panda birth outside China occurred at the Mexico City Zoo.

Until recently, Washington, D.C.'s National Zoo housed Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing, perhaps the most well-known giant pandas in North America. A gift from the People's Republic of China to the people of the United States, they were presented as a gesture of amity and



Giant Panda Facts

goodwill to President Richard Nixon when he visited China in 1972. Ling-Ling, at age 23, died in December 1992.

Giant pandas are among the rarest mammals in the world — there are probably fewer than 1,000 left in the wild. Although adult giant pandas have few natural enemies, the young are sometimes preyed upon by leopards.

Habitat encroachment and destruction are the greatest threats to the continued existence of the giant panda. This is mainly because of the demand for land and natural resources by China's 1 billion inhabitants. To offset this situation, the Chinese government has set aside eleven nature preserves where bamboo flourishes and giant pandas are known to live.

Giant pandas are also susceptible to poaching, or illegal killing, as their dense fur carries a high price in illegal markets in the Far East. The Chinese government has imposed life sentences for those convicted of poaching giant pandas.

The low reproductive capacity of the giant panda makes it more vulnerable to these threats, and less capable of rebounding from its low numbers.

In 1984 the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the giant panda as an endangered species under the Endangered Species Act of 1973. *Endangered* means a species is considered in danger of extinction throughout all or a significant portion of its range. The less dire designation of *threatened* means that a species is likely to become endangered in the foreseeable future. This protection also prohibits giant pandas from being imported into the United States except under certain conditions.

The giant panda is also protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), a treaty among more than 140 nations aimed at controlling illegal

trade in endangered animal and plant species. The Fish and Wildlife Service is the federal agency responsible for the U.S. government's compliance with CITES.

The Service has established a panda policy to assist zoos applying for giant panda importation permits. The policy focuses on the conservation of the species in the wild.

