

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Giant Pandas

by Guy Belleranti

Black and white giant pandas are much loved in their native China and around the rest of the world.

Sadly, they're also a very endangered animal. Much of their forest habitat has been cleared for farms, roads, railroads, and other development. The 1,500 giant pandas still in the wild are restricted to cool, damp mountain heights

containing bamboo and old growth forest. These forests have the hollow logs and stumps pandas need for dens and shelter.



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Giant pandas eat by gripping bamboo stems in their front paws and sitting upright, kind of like a person. Each paw's grip is aided by an extra long flesh-covered wrist bone that acts like a thumb.

Most of the time giant pandas are loners. However, when they come together, they're the most vocal of all bears. They bleat, bark, huff, and growl during their very short breeding season. Cubs squeal and croak when they're with their mothers.



Pandas also communicate by leaving scent markings from glands under their tails. Males find breeding females by scent. Males also sometimes do "hand stands" so they can leave their scent higher up a tree.

Giant panda mothers give birth to one, or sometimes two, tiny cubs. If two cubs are born, only the stronger cub usually survives. Males do not help with the care. The cubs are mostly hairless and only weigh  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a pound (.11 kg). That's 800 times smaller than its 200



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## About the Author

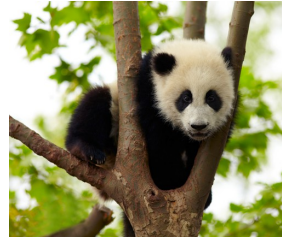


Guy Belleranti is an author of fiction, poetry, articles, puzzles, and humor for children and adults. He also works as a docent at the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences teaching children about the wild animals at the zoo.

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1. In the box below, circle the words that describe a giant panda's natural habitat.

tropical	high altitude	sand dunes	mountainous
forested	extremely dry	arctic	grasslands

2. Why do giant pandas spend so much time eating?
- \_\_\_\_\_



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- Male pandas rub against trees to leave their scent.
- Male pandas fight other males in front of the females to impress them.
- Male pandas walk in circles around female pandas.
- Male pandas do "hand stands" to leave their mark higher in the trees.

5. If a mother giant panda gives birth to two cubs, will they both be with her a year later? Explain why or why not.
- \_\_\_\_\_

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Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. \_\_\_ e \_\_\_ \_\_\_ r i \_\_\_ t e \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

**hint:** limited or confined to a certain area

2. \_\_\_ a \_\_\_ b \_\_\_ \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

**hint:** a very tall, wood-like grass that pandas eat

3. \_\_\_ r i \_\_\_ \_\_\_ i n g \_\_\_\_\_



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6. \_\_\_ a \_\_\_ \_\_\_ i n \_\_\_ s \_\_\_\_\_

**hint:** patterns on an animal's fur or skin that distinguish it from other animals

7. \_\_\_ o \_\_\_ a \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

**hint:** loud; expressive

8. \_\_\_ o \_\_\_ \_\_\_ o \_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

**hint:** empty on the inside



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In the article, "Giant Pandas," you learned that pandas live in a very restricted mountainous habitat in China, where they can find the bamboo that makes up 99% of their diet. In fact, there are only around 1,500 giant pandas left in the wild.

Why do you think there are so few pandas left in the wild? Is there anything that humans can do to help the giant panda population in the wild increase? Use the information in the article and your own ideas to answer the questions.



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## ANSWER KEY

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1. In the box below, circle the words that describe a giant panda's natural habitat.

tropical

high altitude

sand dunes

mountainous

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extremely dry

arctic

grasslands

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**No, likely not. If two cubs are born, usually only the stronger cub will survive.**

## ANSWER KEY

# Giant Pandas

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Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. r e s t r i c t e d

restricted

**hint:** limited or confined to a certain area

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8. h o l l o w

hollow

**hint:** empty on the inside