

Name: _____

Red Pandas

By Guy Belleranti

I smile as I watch a cinnamon-colored, bushy-tailed red panda rest in a tree at the zoo. Its cream-colored, kitten-like face is at least as cute as a giant panda's!

Despite the common name "panda," red pandas are not close relatives with giant pandas. DNA tests show the much larger giant pandas are bears. Red pandas are not bears— they're in their own unique family. Raccoons, which



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digest only small amounts at a time. Because of this, they must eat 2 to 4 pounds every day. That's a lot for an animal weighing only 6 to 14 pounds! In warmer

weather, they also eat fruit and insects.

Sometimes they eat eggs or even small animals.

Red pandas spend most of their time in the trees. Trees provide avenues of escape from predators like snow leopards and dholes (a type of wild dog). They're acrobatic climbers. They have semi-retractable claws to grip branches and long

bushy tails for balance. They're usually mild-mannered, but they use their claws for defense if necessary. They can also release stinky odors from scent glands.



It can get pretty cold where red pandas live. Red pandas use their bushy tails as blankets in cold weather. Their thick fur and furry feet also provide warmth. Furry paw pads keep them from slipping on wet branches and snow.

Red pandas have excellent eyesight, hearing, and sense of smell. These senses, and special whiskers called vibrissae, help them search for food from dusk to dawn. During the day they usually rest.

While they usually live alone, they do come together to breed.



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1. Based on the information in the article, which of the following statements is true about red pandas?
 - a. Red pandas are more closely related to giant pandas than to raccoons.
 - b. Red pandas are more closely related to raccoons than to giant pandas.
 - c. Red pandas are a species of bear.
 - d. Red pandas are a species of raccoon.



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3. According to the article, why do red pandas spend most of their time in trees?
 - a. They are better able to locate their prey from above the ground.
 - b. They build nests in the trees where they spend the winter months.
 - c. They are fearful that people will capture them if they remain on the ground.
 - d. They can quickly escape from and stay out of the reach of predators.
4. Put a check mark next to the dangers that red panda populations face.
 - _____ Forests are being cut down and replaced by farms.
 - _____ People illegally keep red pandas as exotic pets.
 - _____ Humans illegally hunt red pandas.
 - _____ Most red panda babies die before they are a year old.

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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. ___ i n ___ a m ___ n

clue: a flavorful spice that has a brown color

1. _____



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clue: routes, ways to go

5. a ___ o ___ a t ___ c

clue: agile, able to leap and move around easily

5. _____

6. ___ u ___

clue: twilight; evening time

6. _____

7. ___ o a ___ h i ___

clue: illegal hunting

7. _____

8. c o ___ e r ___ a ___ i o n

clue: preserving or protecting wildlife from harm

8. _____

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In the article, "Red Pandas," you learned that red pandas face many threats to their species. They are classified as endangered animals. This means their populations in the wild are decreasing.

With your teacher or parent's permission, research another endangered animal on the internet. Describe the animal on the lines below and give three reasons why that animal is endangered. Be sure to write the web address you used for research on the last line.



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ANSWER KEY

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1. Based on the information in the article, which of

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- People illegally keep red pandas as exotic pets.
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clue: illegal hunting

8. c o n s e r v a t i o n

clue: preserving or protecting wildlife from harm

7. poaching

8. conservation