ANIMAL LEARNING CENTER · NOT CURRENTLY AT THE ZOO

GIANT PANDA

Ailuropoda melanoleuca

Teacher & Student Fact Sheet · © **2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.**
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Fast facts

ANIMAL GROUP	Mammal — bear family (Ursidae)
NATIVE REGION	South-central China: Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu
HABITAT	Mountain forests with a bamboo understory, 5,000–10,000 ft
DIET	More than 98% bamboo
SIZE	2–3 ft at the shoulder; 4–6 ft long
WEIGHT	Males up to 250 lb; females rarely reach 220 lb
LIFESPAN	About 10–15 years in the wild; up to about 30 in human care
STATUS	Vulnerable (IUCN)



A giant panda chewing bamboo. Photo: Mélody P on Unsplash.

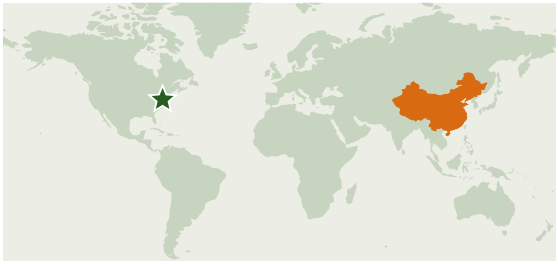
Did you know?

- The giant panda is a true bear, a member of the bear family, Ursidae.
- A panda spends 10 to 16 hours a day finding and eating bamboo, and eats 70 to 100 pounds of it a day.
- A newborn cub weighs only 3 to 5 ounces, about the size of a stick of butter, and is about 1/900th of its mother's size.
- A "pseudo-thumb," an enlarged wrist bone covered by a fleshy pad, helps a panda grip bamboo stems.
- About 1,864 giant pandas live in the wild, all of them in the mountains of China.

Words to know

Habitat: the natural home where an animal finds food, water and shelter.
Herbivore: an animal that eats mainly plants. The giant panda is a bear that lives almost entirely on bamboo.
Pseudo-thumb: the panda's enlarged wrist bone, which works like a thumb to hold bamboo.
Vulnerable: a conservation status meaning a species faces a high risk of dying out in the wild.

Where it lives in the wild



Lives in the wild ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

Think about it

1. How does a panda's pseudo-thumb help it eat bamboo?
2. Why does a giant panda have to eat so much bamboo every day?
3. How do pandas eat different parts of the bamboo in different seasons?
4. Why is losing forest habitat such a problem for giant pandas?
5. Compare the giant panda with the red panda. Which one is a bear?

Draw it

In the box below, draw a giant panda in its mountain forest. Show the bamboo, the misty mountains, and the panda gripping a stem with its pseudo-thumb. Label each part.

STANDARDS · GRADES K–4 **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · K-LS1-1 · K-ESS3-1**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.K.A · 3.3.K.C**

Draw here

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/giant-panda/ · **Sources:** Animal Diversity Web; WWF; IUCN Red List (2016).
Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards: 4-LS1-1 (3.1.4.A) · K-LS1-1 (3.1.K.A) · K-ESS3-1 (3.3.K.C)
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ANIMAL LEARNING CENTER · RESEARCH WORKSHEET

GIANT PANDA

Before and after your research

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Before you research · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Predict: where in the wild does the giant panda live?
Circle one (or more if it lives on more than one):

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

2. Predict: what does it eat?
☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.
☐ Habitat ☐ Herbivore ☐ Pseudo-thumb ☐ Vulnerable

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

4. My question: one thing I want to find out about the giant panda.

While you research

Read the animal page:
plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/giant-panda/

Write two facts you did not know before.

Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.

Draw here

After your research · talk it over

1. Check your prediction. Native region: South-central China: Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu. Was your guess right?
☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

2. Diet check. The fact sheet says: More than 98% bamboo. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.
- Why does a giant panda have to eat so much bamboo every day?
- How do pandas eat different parts of the bamboo in different seasons?

4. Exit ticket.
One thing I learned: _____
One thing I still wonder: _____

ADJUST IT
Grades K–2: talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.

Learn more: plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/giant-panda/ · Fact sheet page 1 has the fast facts, map and vocabulary this page refers to.
Grades K–4 · Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · K-LS1-1 · K-ESS3-1** · Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.K.A · 3.3.K.C**
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