

did you know?

Last Updated Monday, 10 December 2007

- A roundworm parasite accounts for 50% of the known deaths of the wild panda population, posing a "significant threat" to their survival.

- It's official: the 16-week old cub in San Diego has been named Zhen Zhen, which means "Precious," and just took her first steps.

- A record number of panda twins, twelve, were born in captivity this year due to improved breeding techniques, Chinese officials recently reported.

- The choices for the San Diego cub's name are: Ming Zhu (Bright Treasure), Xiao Li (Little Beauty), Zhen Zhen (Precious), and Li Hua (Beautiful China).

- The Vienna cub born August 23 has been named Fu Long, which means "Lucky Dragon."

- You can help NAME THAT PANDA CUB! Visit the San Diego Zoo between Friday, Oct. 5 and Sunday, Oct. 14, and you can suggest a name for the female cub born August 3 to Bai Yun.

- On September 19 at the Madrid Zoo, Queen Sofia of Spain welcomed seven-year-old Bing Xing (Ice Star) and four-year-old Hua Zui Ba (Colored Mouth). Only Bing Xing was seen during the welcoming ceremony, which included a song composed in memory of Chulin, who was born in the Madrid Zoo in 1982 and died there in 1996.

- It's a girl! San Diego Zoo officials have finally announced that the cub born on August 3 to Bai Yun and Gao Gao is female. Although a new cub's gender is often announced after the first exam, there was a delay to ensure the announcement was correct.

- Australian Prime Minister John Howard and China's President Hu Jintao just signed an agreement which will send Wang Wang, 2, and Funi, 1, to the Adelaide Zoo. The pair will be the only pandas in the Southern Hemisphere.

- The first panda cub born in Europe in 25 years was born on August 23 at Zoo Vienna. The cub was the product of natural mating between the zoo's panda pair, Yang Yang (F) and Long Hui (M), and was the only one of a set of twins that survived.

- The only panda cub born in the U.S. this year was born on August 3, 2007, to 4-time mother Bai Yun at the San Diego Zoo. The sex of the cub has not yet been announced.

- Two U.S. panda cubs turned two this year: Tai Shan, at the Smithsonian National Zoo in Washington, DC on July 9, and Su Lin, at the San Diego Zoo on August 3. Both cubs' parents originally came from the Wolong Giant Panda Research Center in China.

- Atlanta, Georgia, will celebrate the first birthday of female cub Mei Lan (whose name means "Atlanta Beauty") on September 6, 2007. Mei Lan, the offspring of Lun Lun and Yang Yang, now weighs 52 pounds and is approximately 47 inches.

- Hua Mei, the first giant panda born in the United States to survive to adulthood, gave birth to her third set of twins in July 2007 at the Wolong Giant Panda Research Center in China. Hua Mei was born in 1989 to Bai Yun (mother) and Shi Shi (father).

- Female giant pandas only ovulate once a year, and are fertile for a period of approximately 48 hours. Most giant pandas born in the U.S. are the result of artificial insemination.

- Adult giant pandas eat anywhere from 40 to 60 pounds of bamboo each day, as they only digest about 20% of the bamboo they eat. Although their diet is over 99% percent bamboo, they have the stomachs of carnivores. They have

difficulty digesting the plant fiber in bamboo and derive little energy and protein from consumption of bamboo.

- Giant pandas are considered endangered, with approximately 1600 in the wild, all in the mountainous regions of central China, and 230 in captivity in breeding centers in China and zoos outside China.

- Giant pandas live solitary lives, with the males and females coming together only during breeding season. Once a panda cub is weaned at 1 ½ to 2 years of age, he or she lives alone. The father plays no part in raising the cub.

- Twin births occur in about 40% of panda births. In the wild, one of the twins usually dies soon after birth, abandoned by the mother. Baby pandas are born very small and helpless, and need the mother's undivided attention. Scientists do not know how the panda mother chooses which cub to rear.

- Cities outside the U.S. and China with pandas include: Mexico City, Mexico; Berlin, Germany; Vienna, Austria; Madrid, Spain; Tokyo, Kobe, and Shirahama, Japan; and Chiang Mai, Thailand.

- A 11-year-old panda who was originally thought to be a male gave birth to twin female cubs on August 6. Jinzhu had been sent to Japan to mate with a female panda, but showed no interest in mating. After examining her, scientists determined she had been incorrectly classified, and performed corrective surgery on her ovaries, which allowed her to successfully mate and bear two healthy cubs.