



30. August 2024

## Press Release

# Panda Twins at Zoo Berlin Show Their Colors

## Two Baby Girls Confirmed | Black-and-White Pattern Emerging

Just over a week after the birth of the panda twins at Zoo Berlin, the panda team is now certain: they are two females. The joy at Zoo Berlin is immense. Both cubs are healthy and are slowly developing the characteristic black-and-white markings typical of giant pandas.

"Our twins are slowly but surely starting to show the panda-typical coloration on their ears, eyes, and shoulder girdle. The two females are agile and developing splendidly," said Zoo and Tierpark Berlin Director Dr. Andreas Knieriem happily. "This is especially thanks to the dedication of the colleagues from the Chengdu Panda Base and the entire panda team, who care for Meng Meng and her offspring around the clock." The exact reason for the black-and-white coloring of pandas is still not fully understood by scientists. However, it is believed that it primarily serves for camouflage or communication with other pandas. "The emerging black-and-white coloration camouflages giant pandas in the snow and the shadows of bamboo thickets. This protects them from potential predators, such as the golden cat, the yellow-throated marten, or the snow leopard, which can prey on young giant pandas. However, the greatest threat to the giant panda is the human-caused loss and fragmentation of its habitat," emphasized biologist and panda curator Dr. Florian Sicks. He added, "Adult giant pandas are solitary, but they communicate intensively through scent markings. The cubs usually stay with their mother for about one and a half to two years. Therefore, the two female pandas, like their brothers Pit and Paule, will eventually go their separate ways. Our Panda Garden at Zoo Berlin only has permanent space for two adult giant pandas." But until then, the twins still have plenty of time. For now, they will continue to drink plenty of milk and cuddle with their mother Meng Meng to ensure both panda cubs continue to develop well. Once the siblings are big and mobile enough, zoo visitors will also be able to meet them – though this will still take some time.

## Background on the Giant Panda

Without conservation measures, the giant panda would likely already be extinct. The giant panda is a unique specialist with specific needs. Thanks to intensive measures against poaching and the promotion of protected areas and connecting corridors, the population has somewhat recovered. However, the giant panda is still listed as "vulnerable" on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List, with just under 2,000 individuals in the wild. The fragmentation of their habitat due to roads, railways, and agricultural land is a major problem for this solitary animal.

Since the summer of 2017, Zoo Berlin has been home to Germany's only giant pandas. On August 31, 2019, panda mother Meng Meng gave birth to two baby pandas, the first pandas



ever born in Germany. Pit and Paule left Zoo Berlin in December 2023 and have been living at the Chengdu Panda Base in China since. In March of this year, after intensive observation and careful preparation by an international team of experts, artificial insemination was performed on Meng Meng. Female giant pandas are only fertile for about 72 hours a year, and the fragmentation of their natural habitat makes it difficult for them to find each other during the mating season.