Let's stand by Mei Xiang and all of the other pandas in the world and do something about climate change!

After all the years of studying the giant panda and trying to understand their needs along with finding ways to improve their breeding, now comes the bad news about climate change and its adverse affect on bamboo the main staple of the pandas.

With China growing so drastically in the industrial sector and now more and more citizens are purchasing cars, this will be a major hurdle to overcome. Up to this point a group of scientist have been working closely with the pandas, at the urging of the government, to do everything they can to help save pandas from extinction.

Research bases and reserves were set up in the mountains where the giant panda lives, to protect their now limited habitat from further human destruction. Having just returned from China and talking with the scientist at one of the bases, it was comforting to know the great progress they have made in so many areas that have negatively affected the lives of these great bears. But now comes the ultimate test.

There is an article out, that discusses the impact of climate change and how the warming temperatures will destroy the existing bamboo creating a mass extinction of the panda unless the problems of climate change are taken seriously. Of course there is mention of developing a bamboo that will grow in warmer climates, but will the nutrient value be adequate? This is not acceptable, governments looking for an easy way out in the solution to climate change. We have to stop or
greatly reduce the emission of greenhouse gasses once and for all! We have allowed this problem to exist for too long now and to think that someone could suggest that having the giant panda go through a mass extinction is what will wake the world up to the climate change problem is ludicris!

The regions where the giant panda lives, is a magnificent site to see and yet is sad to see how small and extreme an area that these bears now live in. It appears to me over the course of their lives they have been running from man's dominance all their lives. Where they once inhabited large areas in China and other regions, they are now limited to a very segmented area that is at a very high elevation. (Click on graphics above to see full size)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mountain Range</th>
<th>Height of Mountain Peak (m)</th>
<th>Height of Snow Line (m)</th>
<th>Glacier Area (sq.km)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Altay Mountains</td>
<td>4374</td>
<td>3000-3200</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tianshan Mountains</td>
<td>7435</td>
<td>3600-4400</td>
<td>9548</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qilian Mountains</td>
<td>5826</td>
<td>4300-5240</td>
<td>2063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pamirs</td>
<td>7579</td>
<td></td>
<td>2258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kunlun Mountains</td>
<td>6596</td>
<td></td>
<td>3566</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karakorum Mountain</td>
<td>8611</td>
<td>5100-5400</td>
<td>3265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanggula Mountains</td>
<td>6137</td>
<td></td>
<td>2082</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiangtang Plateau</td>
<td>7111</td>
<td>4500-5700</td>
<td>7536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nyainqentanglha Mountain</td>
<td>7556</td>
<td>4600-5500</td>
<td>1456</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Himalayas</td>
<td>8848</td>
<td>4300-6200</td>
<td>11055</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gangdise Mountains</td>
<td>7095</td>
<td>5800-6000</td>
<td>2188</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above graphic shows the mountain ranges in China, the pandas are currently living for the most part in the (Qinling and Hengduan Mountains). Very rugged, rocky and cold. So, for some who are saying the pandas need to move to a colder habitat or a higher elevation, I say you don’t know what you are talking about.

Thanks to Jack Liu, an ecologist at Michigan State University, who bravely is speaking out about this problem. Whereas, many scientists, government officials and the ever consuming public are turning a blind eye to climate change, Mr. Liu is not, and I commend him for it. Here are several links to Jack Liu's paper. Read it and take action, now.

Pandas bamboo may be lost to climate change,
Pandas kiss bamboo goodbye with climate change,
Climate change threatens pandas.
Everyone is so excited here at the China Giant Panda Protection and Research Center **CGPPRC** with the release of Tao Tao into the wild. It was one of the first things we were told was going to be taking place when we arrived here last week because our schedule was shuffled around it.

Here is the release from the base. Congratulations to everyone who has worked so hard for the two years in making this day possible. Good luck to you dear Tao Tao.

The world's first wild training panda released back to wild


On the morning of 11st Oct, the National Forestry Bureau and the Sichuan provincial government in Shimian Ya’an held the panda released ceremony, this event will be China's first giant panda through field system training by artificial breeding "Tao tao" released to Liziping nature reserve zone, this marks the China giant panda protection work into the new stage of development.

At 10:13 in the morning, open the "Tao tao" cage door, two years old "Tao tao" from out of the cage, straight into the bamboo forest, formally began new life in the wild.

"Tao tao" was born 2010 August in the Wolong nature reserve zone, "Tao tao" was in the training circle underwent three stages of field training in the area of 2400, 40000 and 240000 square meters. In September this year, experts said, "Tao tao" through field training, healthy, normal growth and development, field survival ability is strong, have stronger vigilance and awareness of self-protection, can be released into the wild. On October 10th, the "Tao tao" from birth place send back to Wolong.

It is an important goal to release the artificial breeding animal through wild training back to wild to enlarge the wild animal populations; it also has important meaning for the restoration and reconstruction for endangered wild animal breeding. The giant panda because of its low breeding ability, and has singleness feeding habits, and habitat fragmentation factors, to release giant panda to wild is more difficult than other wild animals.
National Forestry Bureau in Wolong and at Liziping nature reserve zone establish the giant panda Wild training base and release base, the personnel of the organization of scientific research in long-term research and practice, they summed up in the natural environment the giant panda cub’s with cub’s mother in system wild training methods, training improved ability wildness ability.

“Tao tao” is the first artificial breeding panda which by used new methods of training, at present, there are 6 pandas in Wolong to accept this new system of wild training; the future will be gradually released into the wild.

Experts said, “Tao tao” have to go through: adopt field environment, get into the local population, breeding, these multiple tests in order to realize the goal of back to wild. Researchers will be monitored for a long time for "Tao tao"'s behavior, in order to gain more experiences for artificial breeding giant pandas returns to wild.

At present, there established 64 Giant Panda Nature Reserve zones in Sichuan, Shaanxi, Gansu provinces in China. The giant panda population grew to more than 1600. At the same time, through the strengthening of scientific research, successfully resolved the panda estrus difficulties, survival difficulties technical problems, the captive giant panda number reached 342, basically realization of the self-sustaining of artificial captive giant panda, alleviated the giant panda endangered status.
In China, first day to work with the pandas

How amazing it is to travel to China and be with the pandas. I am so grateful for this opportunity.

As I mentioned in a previous post, I signed on with Earthwatch to work with the pandas in China.

"Earthwatch inspires connections between people and the environment. Our mission is to engage people worldwide in scientific field research and education to promote the understanding and action necessary for a sustainable environment" - Earthwatch.com

This is the first year for Earthwatch working with the giant pandas. "Since 1971, we have been enabling people from all walks of life to join leading scientists working on crucial, environmental research projects locally and globally. We currently support about 60 projects across nearly 40 countries."

Many of my fellow team members have participated in previous expeditions with EW working with the Black Rhinos or Lions in Africa, explored the oceans while testing new robotic equipment to study the fish that live in the kelp, that whales eat and a couple just came from the Tibetan mountains. All as part of Earthwatch.

Today is my first panda day in China. The weather is nice, high in the low 70's and going down to the high 50's at night. Chance of rain is always probable here, so they say.

We will start early, leave at 8 am for the Bifengxia Panda base, near the town of Ya’an where we are staying. We will begin with helping the keepers to clean up the panda enclosures and then have a practice session on how to record different panda behaviors with the use of codes all timed with a stopwatch over a 30 min time period. Once we get the hang of it we will, then move in teams of two and begin recording the behaviors we observe. This is part of the research that is ongoing here at the research base.

By recording this information from their captive pandas and then comparing it with the same method of collecting that we will be gathering from the pandas that are in the wild release program at Wolong, where we will go next week, they can begin to compare information that may help them to understand how wild pandas live.

Wild pandas are almost impossible to observe in the wild, considering the extremely steep- mountainous habitat and their elusive behavior.

I have to apologize if there are any errors, as I cannot access my site, except my work page, which I knew might be a possibility. But thanks to panda pal, techno wizard, Daniel, of Daniel’s Live panda cams will assist me, by emailing me any problems that may appear. BTW, Daniel's page comes in perfectly here in China!

Until I return at the end of the day, you may see some strange goings on but please be patient. I am hoping to provide you with my panda adventure as I experience it, so that you may have a better understanding of what the scientists, engineers and workers do in China to help the giant panda.

Thanks for your understanding.

P.S. No pictures, videos yet, keep your fingers crossed that I can upload some tonight!

October 04, 2012

Another web cam to watch Ling Ping on!

Thanks to a panda pal who tells us there is another webcam where we can keep up with Lin Ping and her family.

It is through UStream. Be sure to bookmark this link: Zoo Thailand Panda Cam.
Gangnum style panda

Thanks to the Chengdu Pambassador from You Tube who has moved their vivacious giant pandas around the world to bring awareness to the pandas.
"He’s topped charts all over the world, broken YouTube and K-Pop records, and taught Britney Spears how to dance...but now PSY from Korea has a new admirer: the Panda.

Sponsored by the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding, and co-sponsored by WildAid, Chengdu Pambassador is a global program offering panda lovers the chance to become a panda ambassador (or "Pambassador") for a year. This channel has been created to spread awareness about the giant pandas of Chengdu and to engage in an informative conversation about the efforts to conserve, breed and release pandas back into the wild".

Created by: Ogilvy Public Relations London
Locations include: Proud, Camden

October 03, 2012

**Being creative to help protect endangered species**

As every birth or death of an endangered animal is looked upon with much scrutiny, (I hope), it is heart warming to see people continuing to find better ways of observing and tracking the wild populations in order to understand what their needs are so that humans and animals can coexist on this planet without facing extinction.

You are probably familiar with the radio collars that are used to keep track of animals and their movements within their habitat. With these collars they can track what areas they frequent or avoid and then investigate these areas to better understand their needs. These systems are used in the giant panda reserves in China.

Here is another system that may play as important a role as the radio collar, the use of drones. I don't know if drones would be applicable to giant pandas or not.
If you are like me, you probably keep up with many different kinds animals around the world and are dismayed with the news of some species whose numbers continue to decline year after year.

It is encouraging to see people being creative in their efforts to closely monitor animals that live in complex ecosystems that are difficult to access as well as present vital evidence of their existence and outside influences that may affect them.

Eye in the Sky: Drones Help Conserve Sumatran Orangutans and Other Wildlife
John R. Platt | September 27, 2012 |

What better way to study the world’s largest arboreal animals than by putting an eye in the sky? A team of scientists working in Indonesia has done just that by launching inexpensive unmanned aerial vehicles (aka drone airplanes), to study critically endangered Sumatran from above the treetops. The technology is already being put into use in other conservation projects around the world.

Continue reading this article at its source: Scientific American.

October 01, 2012

Lin Ping of Thailand, no longer on True TV

I haven't kept up with Lin Ping for some time. She was always so entertaining. Thanks to True TV and Zoological Park Organization for putting up the money needed so that many could enjoy watching her.
True Vision, a local cable network, pulled the plug on the reality show Monday due to apparent declining interest in watching the pandas, who have been housed at a zoo in Chiang Mai, northern Thailand, since 2003.

Interest in their lethargic lives – which revolve around eating bamboo shoots and sleeping – hit a fever pitch in May 2009 when artificial insemination succeeded and father Chuang Chuang and mother Lin Hui produced a cub, named Lin Ping. Six months later, True Vision dedicated a live feed from the panda enclosure in what was a new frontier in Thailand’s growing appetite for reality TV.

Many Thais tuned in initially to what was dubbed the “Panda Channel” and some never seemed to tire of watching the cub claw around, chew bamboo shoots, and doze, perchance dreaming of more shoots.

“I’m very sorry that we are losing this channel,” said Nantana Maneerat, 66, a retiree. “The Panda Channel fostered a connection between Lin Ping and me, and that made me feel like she is my youngest daughter.”

“I’m bored with news and politics,” Mrs. Nantana said. “Watching her chewing bamboo and move around is very enjoyable and makes me relaxed and comfortable.”

The network and the Zoological Park Organization, a government agency overseeing Chiang Mai Zoo, had collaborated on the show. True agreed to shoulder the broadcasting costs for the first two years, and the zoo organization bore the third year. The costs of broadcasting were around THB10 million per year.

The organization decided not to extend the contract, resulting in Monday’s termination. Ratings for the Panda Channel are not available, but executives appear to have perceived that the pandas’ popularity had fallen, said Prasertsak Buntragulpontawee, chief of the organization’s panda research department.

Anyone who wants to see the pandas up close will need to hurry. Lin Ping and her parents are scheduled to be returned to China next year, but the zoo organization hopes to negotiate an extension on the 10-year contract. The pandas attract around 800,000 visitors a year.

Thailand has had the pandas at a steep discount of $300,000 per year, well under the $1 million it typically charged to zoos in the United States, as part of its diplomatic offensive to increase trade and political ties in Southeast Asia.

“It wouldn’t be good if Lin Ping needs to return to China,” said Charli Sandford, an 8-year-old living in Chiang Mai who kept the channel on while doing her homework. “I will miss her very much because it would be difficult for her to get back to Thailand again.”

Giant pandas have difficulty conceiving offspring and the birth and survival of cubs is rare. On Sept. 16, a week-old giant panda cub died at the National Zoo in Washington, D.C.