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Press Release

Panda Party Times Two

Panda twins Leni and Lotti at Zoo Berlin turn two

A delicious surprise for two of Berlin's most popular residents: To celebrate their second birthday, panda twins Leni and Lotti at Zoo Berlin were treated to a special ice cake. Right on schedule for breakfast, the cake—colored with beetroot and carrot juice—was waiting for the two young pandas on the climbing frame in the large panda outdoor enclosure. It did not remain intact for long, as the panda twins enthusiastically set about their icy birthday treat.

Since their birth on August 22, 2024, the two sisters have undergone remarkable development. From newborns weighing just 169 and 136 grams respectively, they have grown into substantial giant pandas. Leni now weighs more than 70 kilograms, while Lotti weighs around 61 kilograms. Interestingly, the weight difference between the two has actually reversed during their development. While Lotti was initially the heavier of the two, Leni now weighs more. For comparison, their mother Meng Meng (13) weighs around 85 kilograms as an adult female giant panda. There are also several noticeable differences in the twins' day-to-day behavior. Lotti is developing into a true bamboo connoisseur and is also highly motivated during medical training. As part of this training, both pandas practice procedures with their care team, including blood draws and dental examinations. Leni is considerably less enthusiastic about these exercises, but is more affectionate and more often seeks the company of her mother. The twins also have differing opinions when it comes to whether indoors or outdoors is the better place to be. "Leni and Lotti have become much more independent and are gradually developing into young giant pandas with personalities of their own. At the same time, their close mother-cub bond remains clearly visible. Both sisters still regularly seek out Meng Meng and want to play with her," reports panda curator Dr. Florian Sicks. Leni and Lotti are both still being nursed by Meng Meng. Lotti, the slimmer of the two, still receives 100 milliliters of milk each day. This amount will gradually be reduced until the beginning of September. Supplemental milk is particularly important when raising panda twins, as a mother panda in the wild generally focuses on caring for just one cub. As the cubs become increasingly independent and develop a growing appetite for solid food, supplemental milk can gradually be discontinued. Bamboo is also taking up an increasingly large share of the Berlin panda sisters' diet, supplemented by special panda biscuits made according to a Chinese recipe. Among other ingredients, the little treats are made from



various types of flour and sweet potatoes. “Two years ago, Leni and Lotti could still fit in the palms of our hands; today, the two of them together weigh more than 130 kilograms. Watching their development has been something truly special for our entire team. As true Berliners, they have long since won many fans throughout the city. At the same time, they are ambassadors for a species whose conservation can only succeed through international cooperation. We must not forget that fewer than 2,000 giant pandas live in their natural habitat,” emphasizes Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr. Andreas Knieriem.

Young giant pandas begin to gradually separate from their mothers at around two and a half years of age. No such signs are currently apparent in Leni and Lotti, and the giant panda family will remain together for the time being. When Leni and Lotti will leave Berlin depends primarily on the animals themselves and has not yet been decided.

Background: The Berlin Panda Story

Germany's only giant pandas have lived at Zoo Berlin since summer 2017. On July 5, 2017, the Panda Garden was officially opened in the presence of then Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel and Chinese President Xi Jinping. On August 31, 2019, Meng Meng gave birth to cubs for the first time. Pit and Paule were the first giant pandas ever born in Germany. In December 2023, the two brothers returned to China, where they have lived at the Chengdu Panda Base ever since. On August 22, 2024, the second generation of panda offspring was born in Berlin with the arrival of Leni and Lotti. The German names Leni and Lotti have a special connection to Berlin: Leni is a tribute to Marlene Dietrich, who was born in Schöneberg, while Lotti is a reference to the neighboring district of Charlottenburg. The giant panda remains classified as Vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List. Thanks to intensive conservation efforts, populations have recovered in recent years. Nevertheless, fewer than 2,000 giant pandas remain in their natural habitat. Since 2017, Zoo Berlin has been part of an international collaboration with the Chengdu Panda Base and other scientific partners, including Prof. Thomas Hildebrandt and Dr. Susanne Holtze from the Reproductive Management Department at the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research (IZW), as well as wildlife endocrinologist Dr. Jella Wauters. The successful rearing of Leni and Lotti is therefore part of a long-term cooperation aimed at conserving this highly specialized species.