



2 September 2019

Press release

Twin bundles of joy

Germany's first panda cubs are born at Zoo Berlin!

Magical moments are currently taking place behind the scenes of the Panda Garden at Zoo Berlin. Using her large, powerful paws, a first-time panda mum lovingly snuggles her tiny pink newborn into the warm, soft fur of her face. On Saturday evening, Berlin's panda population doubled as Germany welcomed its first-ever panda offspring – two of them!

The past few weeks at Zoo Berlin have been particularly tense and exciting, with plenty of waiting and crossed fingers. Finally, on 31 August at 6:54 p.m., the moment everyone had been waiting for arrived: following a gestation period of 147 days, female panda Meng Meng (6) gave birth to her very first cub. The joyous event came just one week after experts from Zoo Berlin and the Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research (IZW) were able to perform an ultrasound scan that determined Meng Meng was indeed pregnant. Immediately after giving birth, the new mother knew just what to do: she placed the tiny creature gently on her belly and began to warm it lovingly with her big paws, warm breath, and the soft fur of her cheeks. But mother and child weren't alone for long, as at 7:42 p.m. – just under an hour later – a second cub was born!

"Meng Meng and her two cubs coped well with the birth and are all in good health," reports veterinarian and Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem with relief. "Even though these are the first offspring born to our young female panda, she is already doing a wonderful job as a mum. In the beginning, the young have to feed roughly every two to three hours and are dependent on the body heat of their mother to keep warm."

Germany's first panda cubs don't display any resemblance to their parents just yet: they were born pink with fine white down and a disproportionately large tail. But though otherwise helpless, the young bears clearly came out with strong lungs – and immediately put them to good use. Meng Meng responds to their loud squeaks by carefully guiding the little ones to her teats to feed. As pandas that give birth to twins usually only raise one of the cubs, in close cooperation with Chinese experts of the Chengdu Research Base of Giant Panda Breeding Zoo Berlin has decided to actively support Meng Meng in the rearing process.



“There are only 1,864 adult pandas currently living in their natural habitat,” says Knieriem. “As a result, every single new cub represents an important contribution to the conservation of the species.” The young pandas are therefore currently on alternating, two-to-three-hour shifts with their mother, and are otherwise being cared for in a cosy warm incubator by the Chinese breeding experts. Vets have even managed to conduct an initial examination – with promising results. The cubs weigh 186 and 136 grams respectively, and generally seem lively and alert. The sexes have not been determined yet.

Berlin’s mayor Michael Müller expresses how he and the entire city is joining Zoo Berlin in celebration of the newborn panda cubs: “What fantastic news! The whole of Berlin is delighted about the new arrivals, and I would like to personally congratulate Andreas Knieriem and the Zoo team. Soon, Berliners will be flocking to admire the city’s new black-and-white twins – something that is only possible thanks to the impressive professionalism and remarkable passion of so many people. Thank you all so much – and congratulations once again!”

The young panda family will therefore be staying behind the scenes for a while and will not be on view to Zoo visitors until further notice. For panda dad Jiao Qing (9), on the other hand, life goes on as normal. Male pandas are not involved in the rearing of their young, so he can be found happily relaxing and munching on bamboo in the Panda Garden. Zoo Berlin’s panda parents Meng Meng and Jiao Qing are sponsored by the Berliner Volksbank.

Zoo Director Dr Andreas Knieriem will be appearing today at Berlin Zoo at 11:30 a.m. to provide statements for radio and TV. Attendance is only possible with advance, written accreditation. Please register by sending an email to presse@zoo-berlin, stating the medium, name(s) or number of persons and, if applicable, format.

PLEASE NOTE: Attendance is not permitted without written accreditation!

When? 2 September 2019, 11:15 a.m.
Where? Zoo Berlin Administrative office
Hardenbergplatz 8, 10787 Berlin