



Berlin, 4 July 2018

Press release

A year of panda-monium

The Panda Garden opened at Zoo Berlin on 5 July 2017

Red lanterns adorned the avenue from the Elephant Gate to the Panda Pavilion. More than 600 guests and international press representatives eagerly awaited the two guests of honour, who would soon declare the Panda Garden officially open. At 3 p.m. on the dot, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Chinese President Xi Jinping made their way to the Panda Garden to personally welcome Germany's only pandas – Meng Meng and Jiao Qing – to Berlin. Shortly afterwards, the red curtain opened to reveal the two giant pandas munching bamboo. A reverent murmur rippled through the crowd – and around the world, thanks to the live coverage of the event.

The state occasion that took place on 5 July 2017 at Zoo Berlin in honour of Berlin's new Chinese bears will not soon be forgotten. In their speeches, both the German Chancellor and the Chinese President highlighted the importance of international cooperation for species conservation efforts. Giant pandas, more than any other animal, have become an international symbol of species conservation, and occupy an almost holy status in their native country. These remarkable bears were once found from right up in the northeastern part of China all the way down into Myanmar and Vietnam. Today, the territory of the bamboo-eating bears has shrunk to the sparse coniferous and deciduous woods around China's Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu provinces. Despite successful conservation efforts, the survival of giant pandas in the wild is not guaranteed. That is why pandas are still classified as "Vulnerable" on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.

"Meng Meng and Jiao Qing have settled in very well during their first year with us," reports Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem. "They now both make full use of their outdoor habitats, happily eating and sleeping in different spots. That is a sign that they feel comfortable here." The two giant pandas remain firm favourites among visitors to the Zoo, and next week they will be celebrating their birthdays in Berlin for the second time. Meng Meng turns five on **10 July**, and Jiao Qing turns eight on **15 July**. On those dates, keepers will serve the birthday boy and girl their birthday cakes at **10 a.m.** in their outdoor habitats. Media representatives are warmly invited to come along and take **photographs**.

In our Panda Blog, Zoo and Tierpark Director Dr Andreas Knieriem looks back on the year's panda highlights in an extended interview to mark the black-and-white bears' first anniversary in Berlin: <https://www.zoo-berlin.de/de>