



14 July 2017

Press release

Many happy returns, Jiao Qing!

The second panda birthday in a week

Our impressive 110-kilo male panda Jiao Qing was born in Chengdu on 15 July 2010 – which means that tomorrow is his seventh birthday! Upon his birth he was given the studbook number 769. His mother's name is Jiao Zi and his father is Ke Bi.

It's relatively easy to say the name Jiao Qing if you remember to pronounce the Q like a "ch", as in the word "qi", but translating the name is more of a challenge. While "Meng Meng" basically means "sweet dream", the meaning of "Jiao Qing" is more difficult to pin down. One of its definitions is something like "charmer" – a trait we are yet to see evidence of, although hopefully he will turn on the charm when he meets Meng Meng. Even experienced translators struggled to come up with an appropriate translation of "Jiao Qing". Ideas bandied about included "coquette", "cuddle bear" and "sweetie pie", until we settled on the nice, straightforward "darling".

"Jiao Qing is appreciably bigger and stronger than his female companion Meng Meng," says Chinese panda keeper Yin Hong. "Meng Meng also has a rounder head and a shorter snout." Zoo Berlin's deputy panda handler and experienced bear keeper Marcus Röbbke adds, "Our male panda is super chilled out and always keeps his cool – so long as he has something to get his strong teeth around. If we serve Meng Meng the famous 'panda muffins' before him, he can get quite vocal."

Pandas under threat

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 right up in the north-eastern part of China, all the way down into Myanmar and Vietnam. Today, the territory of the giant panda has shrunk to the sparse coniferous and deciduous woods in the mountain ranges around China's Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu provinces. The latest panda count carried out by China's State Forestry Administration in 2014 recorded at least 1,864 of these bears living in their natural habitat – 17 percent more than in 2004. But 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.