



Jan. 9th 2019

The first pandayear at Ähtäri Zoo

Giant panda couple Jin Baobao (female, now 4 years, Finnish nick name "Lumi") and Hua Bao (male, now 5 years, Finnish nick name "Pyrö") arrived to Ähtäri 18.1.2018 after long journey from CCRCGP Panda Base in Dujiangyan, Sichuan. Pandas travelled here with two Chinese experts familiar to them and Finnish panda keeper and veterinarian to ensure their wellbeing. Finnish people and especially people in Ähtäri city had waited them for a long time, and they were very welcomed to their new home.

After arrival new Snowpanda House was introduced to Jin Baobao and Hua Bao. During their first month in Ähtäri only the Chinese experts and Ähtäri Zoo's personnel were able to visit them due to quarantine regulations. This was also important to give the pandas a chance to get adjusted to their new enclosures and their new keepers. This period gave us a lot of insight to their personalities: Jin Baobao is very playful, gentle and a little bit shy young female, who is fond to her own keepers. Hua Bao is active young man, who keeps his territory well controlled and likes to try his strength as a male bear should do.

Snowpanda House was opened to public at 16.2.18. At that point the pandas were also allowed to explore their outdoor enclosures after spending one month in their big indoor enclosures in quarantine. Opening week was a huge success, and pictures of especially Jin Baobao playing happily in the snow spread around the world. It was obvious that the Finnish winter is pleasant for the pandas.

The official Opening Event took place on 3 March. The event was honoured by the presence of H.E. Ambassador of People's Republic of China, Mr. Chen Li, and Prime Minister of Finland, Mr. Juha Sipilä. The Opening Event gathered huge world-wide positive media interest, with estimated 1 billion audience through international media. Especially the Pandas playing in the snowy environment was broadcasted widely and favourably in all continents.

During this first year we have learned every day more about these individuals. We have made small changes to enclosures and they are provided with enrichments every day with consideration of their individual preferences. Panda keepers train them regularly to ease the management and to be prepared for breeding later on. Last summer and autumn we also celebrated their 5th and 4th birth day.

Jin Baobao and Hua Bao have been healthy, and their appetite has been good. The two Pandas have acclimatized in Finland extremely well. The climate has proven ideal for both of them. The bamboo is always extremely important with giant pandas and luckily, they have accepted the bamboo that is transported from the Netherlands. They have also had a small taste of same bamboo species grown here in Finland and liked it very much. Currently Hua Bao weights about 120 kg and Jin Baobao about 110 kg. Their

ÄHTÄRI ZOO

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Ähtäri Zoo on toiminut vuodesta 1973 ja se on Suomen vanhin luonnonmukainen eläinpuisto. Puistossa on nykyään yli 50 eri eläinlajia, joista suurin osa on havumetsävyöhykkeelle tyypillisiä lajeja. Kansainvälinen eläinsuojelutyö on tärkeä osa Ähtäri Zoon toimintaa. www.ahtarizoo.fi



favorite bamboo species are usually Ph. Bissetii, Ps. Japonica, Ph. Spectabilis and Ph. Shanghai. The total stock of bamboo available for the Ähtäri Zoo is more than 30 species/varieties.

In the future we hope to see Jin Baobao and Hua Bao breeding and having cubs. Jin Baobao and Hua Bao are still quite young and in 2018 no clear signs of estruses were noted. In 2019 we hope to learn more about their individual behaviour, and make plans for the first breeding season, that hopefully happens 2020. We also are also making preliminary work hopefully leading to research that might give us more insight into the hormonal fluctuations of a female panda. All will be done in close communications with the Chinese experts from CCRCGP. Ähtäri Zoo and CCRCGP has had regular communication through the year 2018 and in the beginning of 2019, it is time to discuss about the plans for the future.

This year with the giant pandas has been a huge success for our Zoo. The number of visitors was nearly double, and the giant pandas has increased our chances to perform conservation education and to collaborate with multiple companies. Jin Baobao and Hua Bao are very well known in Finland, and they are truly working here as ambassadors of China and also species conservation. A total of 275.000 people visited the Zoo by the end of the year 2018, indicating that also the economic premises of the project are solid.

More information

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