

# PANDA NEWS FROM:

## THE NEW BRONX ZOO



CONTACT: Marilyn LeVine  
(212) 664-0901

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### IT'S OFFICIAL! GIANT PANDAS TO VISIT BRONX ZOO

#### "PANDA-MANIA" TO BEGIN APRIL 30TH

Today, final arrangements were made for the giant pandas "Ling Ling" and "Yong Yong" to visit New York City.

Ling Ling and Yong Yong will debut separately on Thursday, April 30. They are on loan for three months (through July) to the Bronx Zoo from the People's Republic of China. The dual purpose of the loan is to increase public awareness of the pandas' endangered status in the wild and to raise funds for the conservation of the giant panda in China. All net admission proceeds to the giant panda exhibit will go to the Chinese for this purpose.

The giant pandas' arrival at the Bronx Zoo is the result of Mayor Ed Koch's efforts over five years on behalf of New York City through the Sister City Program. The complex logistics of the loan were worked out by New York and Beijing Sister City Programs officials and representatives from the New York Zoological Society, the Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens and the Beijing Zoo.

The giant pandas will be flown to New York courtesy of China's national airlines, CAAC.



The New York Zoological Society is... The Bronx Zoo, The New York Aquarium, Wildlife Conservation International, Osborn Laboratories of Marine Sciences, and St. Catherines Wildlife Survival Center.

The giant panda loan program was established by the Chinese so that a few pandas could be circulated to zoos around the world without depleting their numbers in nature.

Ling Ling, the male giant panda, was born in the Beijing Zoological Gardens on September 5, 1985. He weighs in at a very playful 119 pounds. The female, Yong Yong, was rescued as an abandoned infant in the wilds of Sichuan Province. Estimated to be 5 1/2 years, she weighs in at 187 pounds.

Because of the differences in their age, weight and temperament, Ling Ling and Yong Yong will probably not be exhibited together at the Bronx Zoo.

Ling Ling and Yong Yong will be exhibited at the renovated Panda Habitat at the Bronx Zoo. The public will view the pandas from terraced walkways which face a grassy glade, forming an outdoor amphitheater. The net revenues from an exhibit admission charge of \$1.00 for adults and \$.50 for children (after the price of general Zoo admission) will go directly to the Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens for panda propagation. Public viewing hours will be 10:00 A.M. to 5 P.M. (until 5:30 P.M. on Sundays and holidays). Giant pandas are most active during the morning hours.

Scientists believe that fewer than 700 pandas exist in the wild today. Giant pandas inhabit dense bamboo forests high in the

mountains of Western China. Recent depletion of bamboo and loss of pandas in bear traps have increased pressure on the remaining panda population.

During the past decade, scientists from Wildlife Conservation International (WCI), a division of the New York Zoological Society (as is the Bronx Zoo) have worked closely with Chinese researchers to help preserve the giant panda. The most important of these efforts was the 1981-86 research by Dr. George Schaller, Director of WCI. New York Zoological Society General Director and Senior Conservationist Dr. William Conway, Chief Veterinarian Dr. Emil Dolensek and Associate Veterinarian, Dr. Janet Stover also worked with the Chinese on the panda captive breeding program.

The arrival of Ling Ling and Yong Yong will bring the total number of giant pandas in the United States to four during their stay. Two are in permanent residence at the National Zoo in Washington. Pandas have not been on view in New York City since the Bronx Zoo exhibited them from 1938 to 1951.

Admission to the Zoo on Fridays through Mondays is \$3.75 for adults and \$1.50 for children. Admission to the Zoo on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays is on a donation basis. Parking at the Zoo is \$3.00 per day. For senior citizens and children under two, admission is always free. The Bronx Zoo is open every day of the year. For further information, please call (212) 367-1010.

#####

40487