

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Red Pandas

by Guy Belleranti

I smile as I watch a cinnamon colored, bushy-tailed red panda rest in a tree at the zoo. Its cream-colored, kitten-like face is at least as cute as a giant panda's!



Despite the common name "panda," red pandas are not close relatives with giant pandas. DNA tests show the much larger giant pandas are bears. Red pandas are not bears. They're in their own unique family. Raccoons, which share the red pandas' ring-striped tails, are a distant relative.

It's easy to see though why people may think red pandas and giant pandas are closely related. Like giant pandas, red pandas live in cool, damp mountain forests containing bamboo. Also like giant pandas, they have an enlarged wrist bone that acts like a thumb for grasping bamboo.

While red pandas main source of food is bamboo, they have a carnivore's stomach. This means they will only eat the tender leaves and shoots. They can digest only small amounts at a time. Because of this, they must eat 2 to 4 pounds every day. That's a lot for an animal weighing only 6 to 14 pounds! In warmer weather, they also eat fruit and insects. Sometimes they eat eggs or even small animals.

Red pandas spend most of their time in the trees. Trees provide avenues of escape from predators like snow leopards and dholes (a type of wild dog). They're acrobatic climbers. They have semi-retractable claws to grip branches and long bushy tails for balance. They're usually mild-mannered, but they use their claws for defense if necessary. They can also release stinky odors from scent glands.

It can get pretty cold where red pandas live. Red pandas use their bushy tails as blankets in cold weather. Their thick fur and furry feet also provide warmth. Furry paw pads keep them from slipping on wet branches and snow.

Red pandas have excellent eyesight, hearing, and sense of smell. These senses, and special whiskers called vibrissae, help them search for food from dusk to dawn. During the day they usually rest.

While they usually live alone, they do come together to breed. Mothers give birth to one to four cubs. The cubs stay with Mom for about one year, or until the next litter is born.

Red pandas have a range much larger than giant pandas. However, they are in great danger. Their forest habitat continues to be replaced by farms. Poaching and illegal pet collection are also problems. Still, there is hope. Conservation groups like the Red Panda Network are training "forest guardians" to work with local people to create protected areas.

## About the Author



Guy Belleranti is an author of fiction, poetry, articles, puzzles, and humor for children and adults. He also works as a docent at the Reid Park Zoo in Tucson, Arizona. The information in this article comes from his experiences teaching children about the wild animals at the zoo.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Red Pandas

by Guy Belleranti

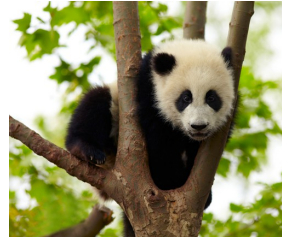


1. Based on the information in the article, which of the following statements is true about red pandas?
  - a. Red pandas are more closely related to giant pandas than to raccoons.
  - b. Red pandas are more closely related to raccoons than to giant pandas.
  - c. Red pandas are a species of bear.
  - d. Red pandas are a species of raccoon.
  
2. Why does a red panda have to eat two to four pounds of bamboo leaves and shoots a day, even though they only weigh six to fourteen pounds themselves?  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
  
\_\_\_\_\_
  
3. According to the article, why do red pandas spend most of their time in trees?
  - a. They are better able to locate their prey from above the ground.
  - b. They build nests in the trees where they spend the winter months.
  - c. They are fearful that people will capture them if they remain on the ground.
  - d. They can quickly escape from and stay out of the reach of predators.
  
4. Put a check mark ( ☒ ) next to the the dangers that red panda populations face.
  - ☐ Forests are being cut down and replaced by farms.
  - ☐ People illegally keep red pandas as exotic pets.
  - ☐ Humans illegally hunt red pandas.
  - ☐ Most red panda babies die before they are a year old.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Red Pandas

by Guy Belleranti



Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1.    \_\_\_ i n   \_\_\_ a m   \_\_\_ n   \_\_\_\_\_  
    **hint:** a flavorful spice that has a brown color
  
2.    \_\_\_ n i   \_\_\_   \_\_\_ e   \_\_\_\_\_  
    **hint:** one-of-a-kind
  
3.    \_\_\_ r a   \_\_\_   \_\_\_ i n g   \_\_\_\_\_  
    **hint:** gripping or grabbing
  
4.    \_\_\_ v e   \_\_\_   \_\_\_ e s   \_\_\_\_\_  
    **hint:** routes, ways to go
  
5.    a   \_\_\_   \_\_\_ o   \_\_\_ a t   \_\_\_ c   \_\_\_\_\_  
    **hint:** agile, able to leap and move around easily
  
6.    \_\_\_ u   \_\_\_   \_\_\_   \_\_\_\_\_  
    **hint:** twilight; evening time
  
7.    \_\_\_ o a   \_\_\_ h i   \_\_\_   \_\_\_   \_\_\_\_\_  
    **hint:** illegal hunting
  
8.    c o   \_\_\_   \_\_\_ e r   \_\_\_ a   \_\_\_ i o n   \_\_\_\_\_  
    **hint:** preserving or protecting wildlife from harm

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

# Red Pandas

by Guy Belleranti



In the article, "Red Pandas," you learned that red pandas face many threats to their species. They are classified as endangered animals. This means their populations in the wild are decreasing.

With your teacher or parent's permission, research another endangered animal on the Internet. Describe the animal on the lines below and give three reasons why that animal is endangered. Be sure to write the web address you used for research on the last line.

[illegible]

Website I used:

## ANSWER KEY

# Red Pandas

by Guy Belleranti



1. Based on the information in the article, which of the following statements is true about red pandas? **b**
  - a. Red pandas are more closely related to giant pandas than to raccoons.
  - b. Red pandas are more closely related to raccoons than to giant pandas.**
  - c. Red pandas are a species of bear.
  - d. Red pandas are a species of raccoon.
2. Why does a red panda have to eat two to four pounds of bamboo leaves and shoots a day, even though they only weigh six to fourteen pounds themselves?

**A red panda has to eat so much food because it has a carnivore's stomach and can only digest small amounts of leaves and shoots at a time.**

3. According to the article, why do red pandas spend most of their time in trees? **d**
  - a. They are better able to locate their prey from above the ground.
  - b. They build nests in the trees where they spend the winter months.
  - c. They are fearful that people will capture them if they remain on the ground.
  - d. They can quickly escape from and stay out of the reach of predators.**

4. Put a check mark ( ☒ ) next to the the dangers that red panda populations face.



**Forests are being cut down and replaced by farms.**



**People illegally keep red pandas as exotic pets.**



**Humans illegally hunt red pandas.**



Most red panda babies die before they are a year old.

## ANSWER KEY

# Red Pandas

by Guy Belleranti



Fill in the missing letters to create a vocabulary word from the article. Then write the full word on the line. Be sure you spell each word correctly.

1. c i n n a m o n cinnamon  
**hint:** a flavorful spice that has a brown color
2. u n i q u e unique  
**hint:** one-of-a-kind
3. g r a s p i n g grasping  
**hint:** gripping or grabbing
4. a v e n u e s avenues  
**hint:** routes, ways to go
5. a c r o b a t i c acrobatic  
**hint:** agile, able to leap and move around easily
6. d u s k dusk  
**hint:** twilight; evening time
7. p o a c h i n g poaching  
**hint:** illegal hunting
8. c o n s e r v a t i o n conservation  
**hint:** preserving or protecting wildlife from harm