

# Zoo-Goers Ready To Greet Baby Panda

He's a four-month-old, 15-pound ball of cuddly black and white fur, and soon people will be lining up to see him and his mom.



He's Tai Shan (pronounced tie SHON), the panda cub born at the Washington National Zoo July 9. This month, some people have been invited to see him, and in December, he will go on public display.

Tai Shan was born while his mother, Mei Xiang (may-SHONG), and his father, Tian Tian (t-YEN t-YEN), are on loan to the U.S. from China. Tai Shan will stay at the National Zoo until he is 2 years old, and then he will go to China.

## **NEWS WORD BOX**

endangered  
panda bamboo  
habitat China

Panda fans all over the world have been watching Tai Shan nap, eat, and learn to walk through video on the Internet. He was given his name, which means "peaceful mountain" in Chinese, when he was 100 days old. In the Chinese culture, that is the age when pandas are named. More than 200,000 people submitted suggestions for his name.

Pandas are an **endangered** species, so it is very exciting when a cub is born. Pandas only live in southwest China, and there are only about 1,600 pandas left in the wild. The bears eat **bamboo**, and as China's population grew, more bamboo forests were cut down to make room for people. That destroyed some of the pandas' natural **habitat**. Now the Chinese government has a law to protect the area where the pandas live.

## **MORE FACTS ABOUT PANDAS**

- An adult panda can eat between 25 and 40 pounds of bamboo a day.
- Scientists used to think pandas were related to raccoons; now they know that pandas are bears.
- Pandas have the smallest newborns of any bear species. Panda cubs weigh between 4 and 8 ounces when they are born, which is the size of a stick of butter.

## **THINK ABOUT THE NEWS**

What other endangered species do you know about? Why are they endangered? What is being done to help them?