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# Meet the 'Bigfoot of China'

**Ryan Burden**  
*The Chronicle*

Sightings of the mythical Bigfoot and Loch Ness monster have been a source of mystery and wonder for years. With thousands of new species discovered each year, it isn't irrational to believe such species could exist in the depths of oceans or jungles. At one point in time, the elusive giant panda was considered the Bigfoot of China. The beast was so well-hidden in the dense bamboo forests of China that Chinese trackers spent over 60 years trying to find the legendary creature. The trackers had their doubts about the fabled animal. After all, the notion of a chubby black and white spotted bear that lazes around the forest eating a mostly herbivorous diet seemed insane at the time.

The giant panda's rarity was likely influenced by the species' decreasing population. Giant pandas are currently classified as an endangered species. The species has been poached for decades for its soft fur, and its continued habitat loss and low birthrate has allowed the great panda's numbers to dwindle.

Rapid expansion in China has caused the natural habitat of the giant panda to disappear almost entirely, forcing the pandas to travel into the mountains for refuge. Although many animal activists insist that keeping pandas behind bars is cruel, in order to avoid having to explain to our children what pandas were, the habitat of pandas must be allowed time to



Photo courtesy of Ken Ardill

**NATIONAL PANDA-MIC:** *Da Mao enjoying his last moments of relaxation by chomping a shoot of bamboo in his outdoor exhibit at the Toronto Zoo before his journey into parenthood.*

heal and regrow. The Toronto Zoo is one of many organizations that support the habitat reproduction for pandas.

Very recently, the Toronto Zoo acquired the first giant pandas to venture to Canada,

Er Shun and Da Mao. The duo arrived from China in 2013 and will live at the Toronto Zoo until 2018. Staff from Toronto Zoo tweeted that Er Shun gave birth to two healthy cubs on October 13th. An extremely ad-

vanced care unit equipped with incubators had been set up at the zoo in anticipation of the births.

The Toronto Zoo employs a reproductive physiologist working with pandas to help

promote fertility and increase birth rates. News of the panda cubs was met by roars of excitement from both the zoo staff and the bears.

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## *Surrounded by Otters*

*Oshawa Generals first-round pick Jack Studnicka chases down the puck while surrounded by several Erie Otters at the start of the third period of an Ontario Hockey League game at the General Motors Centre Oct. 16. The Generals lost the game 7-4.*

Logan Caswell



## **WINNER!**



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