

# British panda given helping hand in quest for cub

April 21 2013

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Male giant Panda Yang Guang (Sunshine) relaxes with some bamboo in his enclosure at Edinburgh Zoo on December 12, 2011. Experts at Edinburgh Zoo in Scotland have artificially inseminated Britain's only female giant panda Tian Tian after she failed to mate with her male partner, Yang Guang, the zoo announced on Sunday.

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Despite Yang Guang showing "consistently encouraging behaviour", the zoo decided to step in overnight Saturday as Tian Tian's hormones showed she was approaching her 36-hour fertile period.

"Natural mating was not attempted," explained a zoo spokesman.

"Yang Guang had been interested and shown consistently encouraging behaviour, however based on his many years' experience, our Chinese colleague Professor Wang felt that although Tian Tian had displayed all of the correct behaviours, she had also displayed signs that told him she would not be conducive to mating.

"The procedures went very much to plan and they are both well, but will be off show until Tuesday," added the spokesman.

The zoo acquired Tian Tian, whose name means Sweetie, and Yang Guang (Sunshine) from China in December 2011 but the pair have so far failed to mate.

The zoo will not know until mid-July if Tian Tian is pregnant, and then they will only have weeks before a tiny, blind, bald [baby panda](#) is born.

And that would not necessarily spell success.

Two [pandas](#) in a zoo in Tokyo had a baby last year, the first [giant panda](#) cub there for 24 years, but it died of pneumonia a week later.

Pandas, whose natural habitat lies in mountainous southwestern China, have a notoriously low reproductive rate and are under pressure from factors such as [habitat loss](#). China has about 1,600 pandas living in the wild.

Their normal breeding season is mid-April to May.

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