

Unbear-lievable: doubts over Myanmar 'red panda' find

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Doubts were cast Monday over a poignant tale of a rescued panda donated to a Mandalay zoo, after an expert said a photo in Myanmar's state media showed a creature that more closely resembled a black bear.

The "Himalayan panda"—a term sometimes used for the small copper-furred red panda—was found in a remote area of eastern Shan state near the border with Thailand, according to the state-backed Global New Light of Myanmar.

The "little panda was donated to the Mandalay Yadanaporn Zoological Garden", the report said citing local officials and the forestry department.

But a photograph accompanying the article showed a creature that was black from snout to paws.

"Looking at the news photo... it's not a panda. It's just a Himalayan bear commonly found in Myanmar," an official from the forestry department's wildlife conservation section told AFP requesting anonymity.

Pandas are also not found in Shan state, he said.

"We have [red pandas](#) in the northern part of the country... but I have no idea how many of them there are," he said.

Scepticism also swiftly swirled on social media.

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The panda confusion has revived memories of mistaken animal identity elsewhere.

In 2013, a Chinese zoo tried to pass off a large Tibetan Mastiff as an "African lion"—but were rumbled when the hairy dog started barking.

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