

Chinese panda gives birth in Belgium

June 2 2016



Giant panda Hao Hao holds her cub in her mouth at the Pairi Daiza zoo in Belgium on June 2, 2016

A giant panda on loan to Belgium from China has given birth to a cub, a rare event for the endangered species, the Pairi Daiza zoo said Thursday.

The zoo and the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda "have the great pleasure to announce the birth of a [panda cub](#)", Pairi Daiza said in a statement.

"Less than 2,000 pandas can be found in the wild, making every birth a true miracle", it said.

"Over the past 20 years, only two European countries (Austria and Spain) were able, with China's help, to successfully reproduce pandas.

"Belgium will thus be the third European country to have ever had the pleasure of welcoming a panda cub."

The mother, Hao Hao, and her mate Xing Hui were loaned to Belgium for 15 years in February 2014, on the occasion of a state visit to the kingdom by China's President Xi Jinping.

She was artificially inseminated twice in February with the sperm of Xing Hui.

The [zoo](#), in Brugelette, about 50 kilometres (30 miles) west of Brussels, said last month that Hao Hao was showing signs she could be pregnant, but had remained cautious over whether she would actually give [birth](#).

"For several weeks, she ate twice the usual amounts of bamboo, then she became increasingly disinterested in food and began to refuse to leave her cave", Hao Hao's minder Tania Stroobant had said.



Giant panda Hao Hao is photographed on June 2, 2016 after giving birth at the Paira Daiza zoo in Belgium

"Very recently we also noticed a swelling of her breasts which indicates that she is preparing to breastfeed."

There remain about 1,800 freely roaming pandas in the world, with about 400 in captivity, mainly in southwest China.



A newborn panda is checked at Paira Daiza zoo in Belgium on June 2, 2016

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