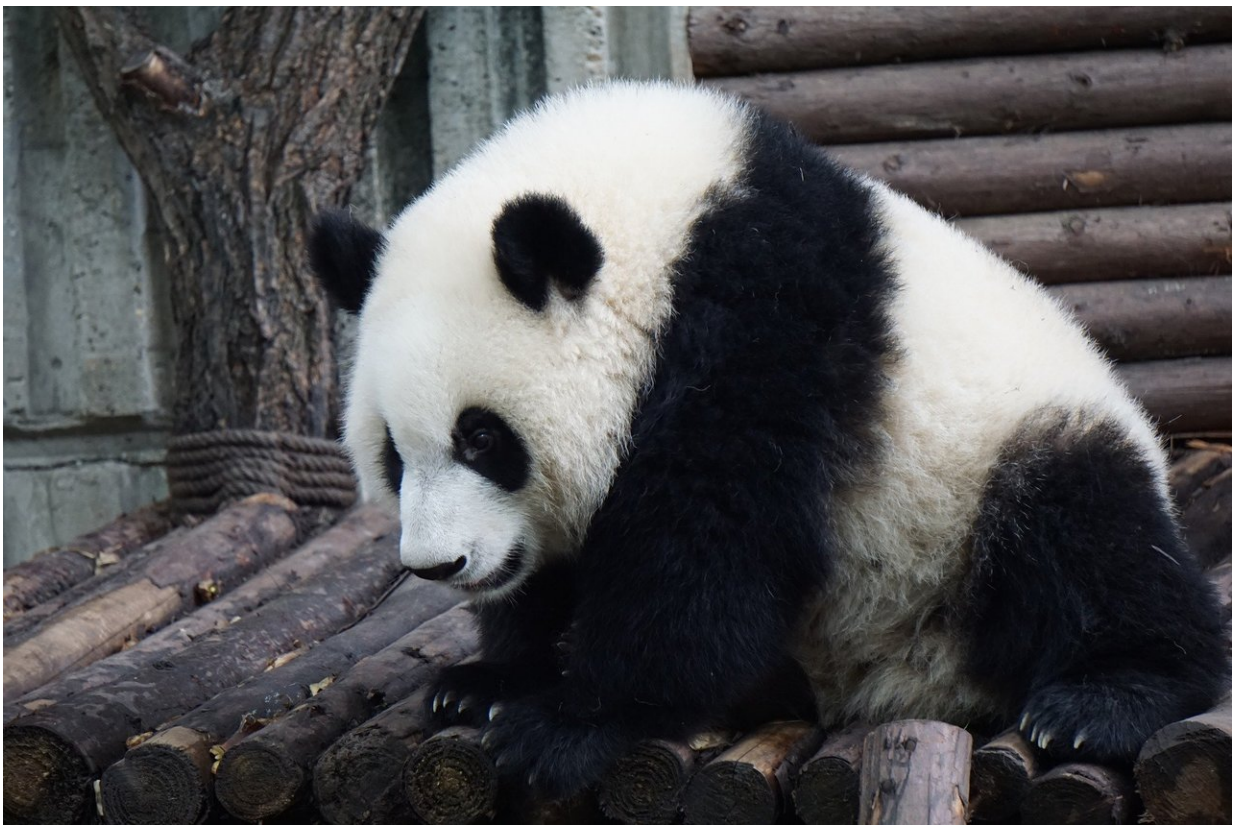


A study of mammalian vocalizations in lead-up to copulations using giant pandas as an example

October 31 2018, by Bob Yirka



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A team of researchers from San Diego Zoo's Institute for Conservation Research and the China Research and Conservation Centre for the Giant

Panda has found that vocalizations play an important role in the lead-up to copulation with giant pandas. In their paper published in the journal *Royal Society Open Science*, the group describes their study of vocalizations leading up to copulation in giant pandas and what they learned.

A lot of research has been conducted on [vocalizations](#) that are a part of mating rituals in mammals, but what about vocalizations that occur after a potential mate has responded? That is what the researchers with this new effort wanted to know. Do such vocalizations play a role in the success or failure of a given mating attempt? And if so, in what ways? To find the answers to these questions, the researchers chose to study the [vocalization](#) rituals of giant pandas as they were about to engage in intercourse.

To learn more about how vocalizations are used once a male and female are engaged in the lead-up to copulation, the researchers focused their study on 23 adult giant pandas living near Sichuan, China. The animals were monitored during the breeding season over the years 2016 to 2018. The team used microphones set up in the area to record the sounds the giant pandas made as they went about their [courtship rituals](#).

The researchers found patterns in the noises made by their subjects—some noises and the way they were expressed led to successful mating. Other noises, on the other hand, led to failure. They noted also that giant pandas vocalized in different ways—some vocalizations were expressed softly into the ear during intercourse, as one example, an act the researchers described as sort of a love song. They suggest the vocalizations are an important means for achieving synchrony and expressing intentions.

The researchers suggest their findings could help those involved in assisting with panda reproduction efforts. It could also help prevent

violent conflicts that sometimes arise between [giant pandas](#) when [mating](#) rituals go awry.

More information: Benjamin D. Charlton et al. Vocal behaviour predicts mating success in giant pandas, *Royal Society Open Science* (2018). [DOI: 10.1098/rsos.181323](https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.181323)

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