

# Giant Panda or Red Panda?

A Compare and Contrast Book



by Chris Schmitz

# Giant Panda or Red Panda?

A Compare and Contrast Book

When one hears the word “panda” most people immediately think of the large black and white “panda bears.” Yes, giant pandas are a type of bear. Did you know that red pandas are in an animal family of their own? While the two animals may not belong to the same animal family, they do share some similar characteristics like a “thumb wrist” and a reliance on bamboo. Explore the similarities and differences between these mammals in this latest addition to the Compare and Contrast Series!

Arbordale Publishing offers so much more than a picture book. We open the door for children to explore the facts behind a story they love.

The *For Creative Minds* includes

- Thinking it Through
- Giant or Red? Adaptation Identification
- Panda Fun Facts
- Help or Hurt?

Thanks to the Panda Care Team at Zoo Atlanta for verifying the information in this book.

Arbordale’s interactive ebooks read aloud in both English and Spanish with word-highlighting and adjustable audio speed. Available for purchase online.

**Chris Schmitz** has worked in environmental education at zoos and aquariums for over 35 years. She is the Director of Education at Utah’s Hogle Zoo. Chris remembers hiking with her family as a child, turning the corner, and seeing a black bear sitting in the middle of the path eating huckleberries. The wonder of that moment observing that hungry bear and many other equally magical wildlife encounters as a child helped set her career path and to writing her first book, *Black Bear or Grizzly Bear? A Compare and Contrast Book*. She hopes her books will help children learn more about the natural world and motivate them to protect it.



Chris Schmitz

## A note for parents and caregivers

Helping young children develop critical thinking skills is a gift they’ll have for life. The book you are holding can help you to help them do just that.

Before reading the book, ask the child(ren) how they think these animals are alike or different. That helps you to understand what they already know or if they have any misconceptions.

After reading, go back through the book together looking at photos to find and discuss things. Ask verbal children to describe or explain what they see. Even young, non-verbal children can find and point to things. For example, have children find or point to:

- panda claws
- red panda striped tails
- pandas holding things with their “opposable thumbs”
- pandas climbing or in trees
- pandas in zoos

Ask the child(ren) to describe one new thing they learned or found most interesting.

Do the “For Creative Minds” activities in the back of the book with them.

Discussion Questions:

- Conservation groups have worked hard to help giant pandas. Why is that important?
- What are some ways that zoos help threatened or endangered animals?

# Giant Panda or Red Panda?

A Compare and Contrast Book

by Chris Schmitz



Giant pandas and red pandas are mammals. Like all mammals, they share some common features.

Mammals have a backbone (spine).

Mammals have fur or hair.

Baby mammals drink milk from their mothers.

Mammals make their own body heat (warm-blooded).



Giant panda skeleton



Giant panda cub drinking milk



Giant pandas are sometimes called panda bears. They do belong to the bear family Ursidae.

Like most bears, giant pandas have big bodies with short legs, rounded ears, thick fur, and tiny tails. They walk on the soles of their entire feet.



Despite their shared “panda” name, red pandas are not bears. Red pandas are in their own animal family.



Red pandas are about the size of a domestic cat or raccoon.

They have red-orange, woolly fur with a dark brown belly.

Their faces have red-orange “tear tracks” running down both cheeks.

Their long furry tails have tan and red stripes and are used for balance.

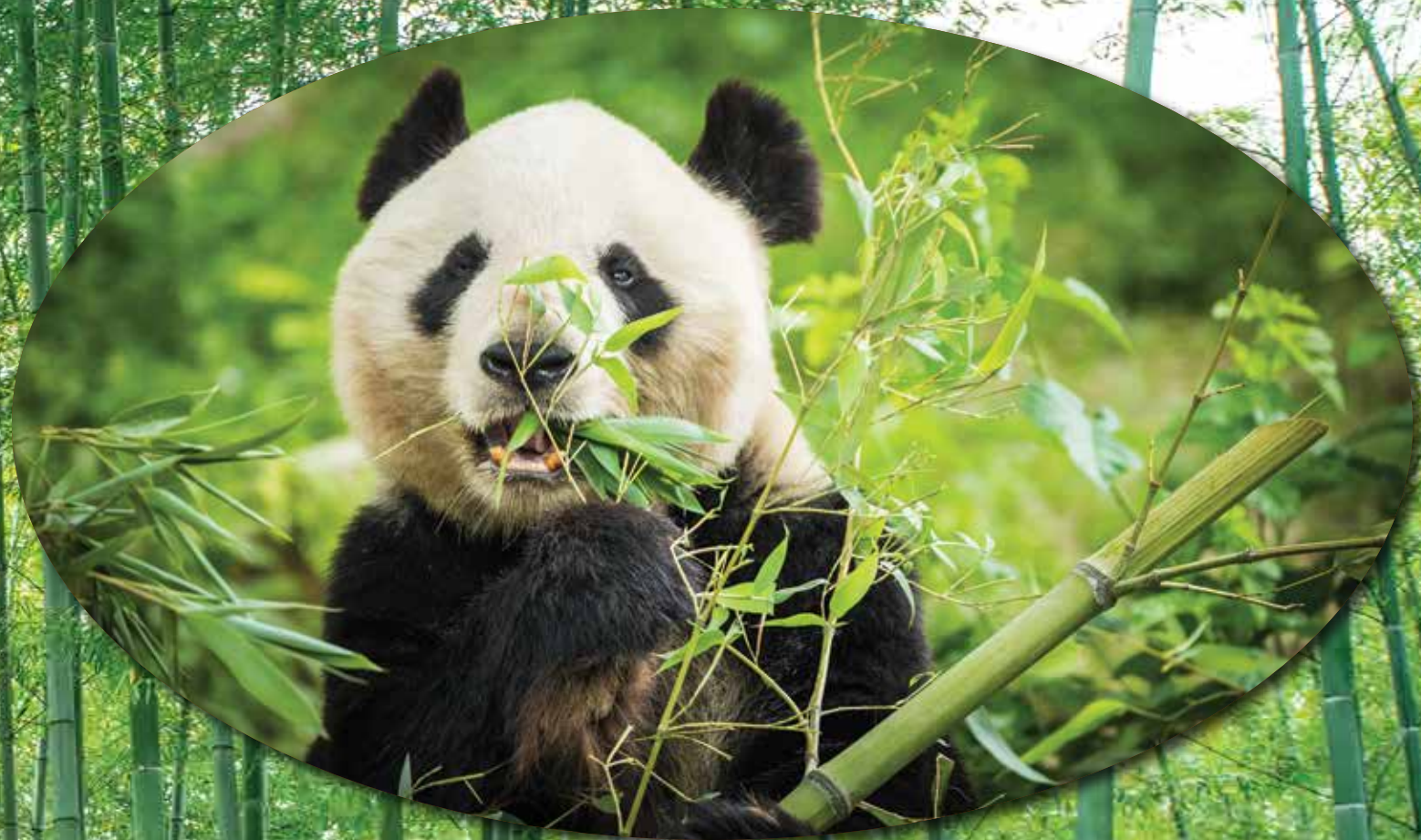
Skunks and raccoons are distant “cousins” to red pandas.



Both pandas eat bamboo as their main diet. They must eat a lot of bamboo because they only digest 20-30% of what they eat.

A hungry giant panda may spend 16 hours a day eating up to 80 pounds of bamboo.

A red panda can spend up to 13 hours a day looking for and eating as many as 20,000 bamboo leaves!



# For Creative Minds

This section may be photocopied or printed from our website by the owner of this book for educational, non-commercial use. Visit [www.ArbordalePublishing.com](http://www.ArbordalePublishing.com) to explore all the resources supporting this book.

## Thinking it Through



Both pandas can hold onto things with special wrist bones that act like our thumbs.

Can you think of any other animal that can hold onto things with their paws (hands)?



All living things are classified to see how they relate to each other. Like humans, both pandas are mammals. Looking at the chart below, can you describe how these animals are classified alike and where they differ from each other?

- Where do giant pandas and red pandas break off from each other?
- Where do humans break off from the pandas?
- Of all animals shown in the chart, which is most closely related to the giant panda?
- Of all animals shown in the chart, is the red panda more closely related to the black bear or the raccoon?

	Human	Black Bear	Giant Panda	Red Panda	Raccoon
Kingdom	Animal				
Phylum	Chordata (spine/backbone)				
Class	Mammal				
Order	Primate	Carnivora			
Superfamily				Musteloid	
Family	Hominidae	Ursidae		Ailuridae	Procyonidae
Genus	<i>Homo</i>	<i>Ursus</i>	<i>Ailuropoda</i>	<i>Ailurus</i>	<i>Procyon</i>
Species	<i>sapiens</i>	<i>americanus</i>	<i>melanoleuca</i>	<i>fulgens</i>	<i>lotor</i>

## Giant or Red? Adaptation Identification

Using what you read in the book, can you identify whether it is a giant panda, a red panda or both pandas?

I use my “wrist thumb” to hold onto bamboo.

1



I can't stand on my hind legs for long but I am good at climbing trees.

2



I can partially pull my claws in and out.

3



4



I use my long tail to help me balance.

5



I can stand on my two hind feet. If needed, I can use my front paws to protect myself.

6



Like other bears, I have a small tail.

Answers: 1: both; 2: giant panda; 3: red panda; 4: red panda; 5: both; 6: giant panda

## Panda Fun Facts

Giant pandas are four to six feet long and weigh 200 to 300 pounds—a little smaller than an adult American black bear. Males are larger than females.

Red panda adult males and females weigh up to 17 pounds and measure 43 inches from the nose to the end of their tails.



*How tall are you? How does that compare to a panda's length?  
Are you closer in size to a giant panda or a red panda?  
What is something that weighs about the same as a red panda?*



The unique colors of both pandas help them hide from predators (camouflage).

Giant panda's black and white pattern helps them blend into the snow and bamboo forests.

Red pandas' orangish color blends into the red moss and white lichens where they live. The dark stomach fur makes it hard to see them from below as they sleep in the trees during the day.

*Can you think of other animals that use camouflage to hide?*

While both pandas mostly eat bamboo, giant pandas might also eat other plants and even hunt and eat small rodents.

Red pandas will also eat fruit, insects, bird eggs, and small lizards. They sometimes get fruit treats in zoos.



*What is your favorite food? What things do you eat that pandas also eat?*

## Help or Hurt?

Which of these things do you think helps pandas and which do you think could hurt or harm them? Can you describe why?

1 cutting down panda habitat



2 breeding programs



3 roads that isolate pandas from each other so they can't mate



4



panda education and conservation programs

5



panda poop helps spread bamboo seeds

6



cutting down bamboo forests

**STEM Project:** Design a way for giant pandas to cross roads to get from one isolated habitat to another. Could this be used for other endangered animals too?

Answers: 1: hurt, 2: help, 3: hurt, 4: help, 5: help, 6: hurt



Thanks to the Panda Care Team at Zoo Atlanta for verifying the information in this book.  
All photographs are licensed through Adobe Stock Photos.

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Schmitz, Chris, 1963- author.

Title: Giant panda or red panda? : a compare and contrast book / by Chris Schmitz.

Description: Mt. Pleasant, SC : Arbordale Publishing, LLC, [2024] | Includes bibliographical references.

Identifiers: LCCN 2023054227 (print) | LCCN 2023054228 (ebook) | ISBN 9781643519937 (English paperback) | ISBN 9781638170129 (dual-language, read along) | ISBN 9781638170310 (pdf) | ISBN 9781638170501 (epub3)

Subjects: LCSH: Giant panda--Juvenile literature. | Red panda--Juvenile literature.

Classification: LCC QL737.C27 S276 2024 (print) | LCC QL737.C27 (ebook) | DDC 599.789--dc23/eng/20231213

LC record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023054227>

LC ebook record available at <https://lcn.loc.gov/2023054228>

Also available in Spanish: *¿Panda gigante o panda rojo? Un libro de comparaciones y contrastes*

Spanish Paperback 9781638172925

Spanish PDF 9781638173007

Spanish ePub3 9781638173045

The dual-language read-along is available online at [www.fathomreads.com](http://www.fathomreads.com)

#### Bibliography

IUCN. "The IUCN Red List of Threatened Species." IUCN Red List of Threatened Species, IUCN, 2022, [www.iucnredlist.org](http://www.iucnredlist.org).

Staff, Aza. "How Zoos and Aquariums Protect Endangered Species." [www.aza.org/connect-stories/stories/how-do-zoos-help-animals](http://www.aza.org/connect-stories/stories/how-do-zoos-help-animals), 15 Mar. 2019, [www.aza.org/](http://www.aza.org/)

What Is Bamboo? - American Bamboo Society. [www.bamboo.org/what-is-bamboo/](http://www.bamboo.org/what-is-bamboo/).

WWF. "WWF - Endangered Species Conservation | World Wildlife Fund." World Wildlife Fund, 2018, [www.worldwildlife.org](http://www.worldwildlife.org).



Text Copyright 2024 © by Chris Schmitz

The "For Creative Minds" educational section may be copied by the owner for personal use or by educators using copies in classroom settings.

Arbordale Publishing, LLC  
Mt. Pleasant, SC 29464  
[www.ArbordalePublishing.com](http://www.ArbordalePublishing.com)



If you enjoy this book, look for other Arbordale books that may be of interest:



Includes 4 pages of learning activities.  
[ArbordalePublishing.com](http://ArbordalePublishing.com)