

Red Panda (Western)

Ailurus fulgens fulgens



Class: *Mammalia*

Order: *Carnivora*

Family: *Ailuridae*

Characteristics: Red pandas are a similar size to domestic cats. They can grow to a length of 20-25 inches long with tails 11-19 inches long and weigh 6-14 pounds ([National Geographic](#)). They are known for their distinct red color on the back and the extremely bushy, red and white ringed tail. The face color changes with age, beginning more white and gaining more red through the years. Their underbellies tend to be darker to blend in with the canopy for predators looking upward. Red pandas have that soft, dense fur covering the entire body, including the feet. This keeps them warm at high altitudes and prevents slipping on snowy and icy terrain ([National Zoo](#)).

Behavior: The red panda is a shy, solitary animal. They are alone most of the time in the wild, except to breed. They are mostly nocturnal creatures, being most active at night and dawn and dusk. Red pandas spend a majority of their time high in the trees and will even sleep in the trees. Red pandas communicate with others of their species with scent glands, visual cues, and a variety of calls. ([San Diego Zoo](#))

Reproduction: Red pandas reach maturity at 18-20 months of age. The female is only fertile for one or two days per year. There is **delayed implantation** to assure that the cubs are born at the most successful time of year. Females most often give birth to two young but the litter size ranges from 1-4 young. Red pandas are born with **gray and tan fur** and their eyes and ears are shut. At 2-3 weeks, the eyes and ears will open and at 13-22 weeks they will stop nursing and the fur will start to change to red. By 5 months of age, the cubs are almost fully grown. ([San Diego Zoo](#))

Diet:

Wild: Bamboo, fruits, flowers, acorns, roots, eggs, small mammals, and insects.
Zoo: leaf-eater biscuits, bamboo, and various produce.

Conservation: [IUCN Redlist](#) classifies the red panda as vulnerable. There are less than 10,000 individuals in the wild, and the population is declining. Red panda populations are greatly threatened by habitat loss, poaching, and inbreeding dangers. Deforestation for logging, housing, and agriculture is destroying the habitat of the red panda. Red pandas are part of the species survival plan in zoos.

FYI: Red pandas are also called lesser panda, red cat-bear, and firefox.

Red pandas have their own unique taxonomic family, but are most closely related to raccoons and their relatives, not to giant pandas.



Range & Habitat:

Red pandas are found in bamboo and temperate forests in parts of Nepal, India, Bhutan, Myanmar, and southern China. They are usually found in high elevations in cold mountain areas.



Lifespan: up to 15 years in captivity, 10 years in the wild.

Special Adaptations: Red Pandas have a specialized wrist bone that acts as a **"false thumb"** to help them grip bamboo shoots.

IUCN Conservation Status:

Vulnerable

