

Red panda safely returned after animal keeper reports it outside of his exhibit



SEATTLE— At approximately 9:40 a.m. today, an animal keeper at Woodland Park Zoo reported a 1-year-old male red panda, Zan (rhymes with van), was not in his exhibit. He had been seen in his exhibit at 7:30 a.m. Minutes later, he was located in a tree in the nearby crane exhibit where he was safe from any danger. Animal management staff kept an eye on Zan at all times and at 3:00 p.m. were able to lure the red panda to the ground safely with his favorite treats—apples and grapes—and return him to the indoor den, which is off public view.

Returning Zan to the off-view indoor den will allow staff to assess the outdoor enclosure for safety. Carson, a 7-year-old male red panda, will be moved to the public outdoor habitat.

Once the 15-pound animal was reported outside his home, the zoo's security and animal care teams immediately responded, including forming a perimeter, securing animals in surrounding exhibits and diligently searching for the animal. The teams are still evaluating how Zan got out of his exhibit.

Red pandas are instinctive climbers and spend much of their time in trees, napping in nests that they build on evergreen branches. Throughout the incident, the safety of the red panda was the sole concern, as red pandas pose little threat to people or other animals.

Zan will be monitored by his animal care team to ensure his behavior is normal and he did not sustain any injuries.

"We're so grateful that Zan is safe, and proud of the animal keepers for being observant and responsive. They care deeply for the animals and knew exactly what to do to bring Zan down safely," said Sheri Horiszny, Chief Operations Officer at Woodland Park Zoo. "As a precaution, we will immediately do more pruning."

In December 2018, another pair of twin red panda cubs living at the zoo fell from their habitat when a branch in their favorite tree broke and landed just outside of their habitat.

Woodland Park Zoo's park-like setting is teeming with trees and foliage. "The zoo's beautiful forest-like setting provides wonderful opportunities for our animals to use their natural skills to climb and explore, and truly allows them to thrive. We continuously balance providing these climbing opportunities with necessary pruning to keep animals and trees safe and healthy," added Horiszny.

Zan was born in May 2020 at Woodland Park Zoo. His twin sister moved to another zoo a couple of months ago.

Red pandas share the name of giant pandas, but more closely resemble raccoons. Recent studies suggest they are closely related to skunks, weasels and raccoons.

An endangered species, fewer than 10,000 red pandas remain in their native habitat of bamboo forests in China, the Himalayas and Myanmar, and share part of their range with giant pandas. Their numbers are declining due to deforestation, increased agriculture and cattle grazing, and continuing pressure from growing local populations.

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