

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONTACT:Christan Baumer
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When people hear the word panda, they generally associate it with a large black and white bear. However, the red panda has a strikingly different appearance from the giant panda. The red panda, also sometimes referred to as the lesser panda, is slightly larger than a domestic cat and weighs between 12 and 20 pounds. Red pandas have thick, rusty red fur with distinctive white markings on the face, giving them a raccoon-like appearance. They predominantly live in trees and are native to the cool mountain forests of the Himalayas, located in the southern and southeastern parts of Asia.

The red panda, like the giant panda, is a specialized bamboo feeder. Approximately two-thirds of a red panda's total diet consists of bamboo alone. The other portion is made up of fruit, grasses, and roots. Red pandas will also supplement their diet with insects, eggs, small birds, and rodents. Since bamboo is their main food source, red pandas, like giant pandas, have the unique characteristic of having a "false thumb." This extension of one of their wrist bones allows them to grasp bamboo shoots with more ease, aiding in the feeding process.

Red pandas are typically solitary, crepuscular animals, which mean they are mostly active during the hours of dawn and dusk. They can usually be found resting in the branches of trees or in tree hollows for most of the day. Come nighttime though, they will usually descend from the treetops to search for food on the ground and consume water. One might think that the red panda would drink by lapping water like a dog or a cat; however, they actually do so by submerging one of their front paws and then licking the water from it.

Like its larger counterpart, the red panda is also considered to be an endangered animal. There is estimated to be fewer than 2,500 individuals that make up the wild red panda population, and those numbers continue to decline. Habitat destruction and fragmentation is a big problem facing the wild population. Not only are their homes being destroyed, but their vital food source, bamboo, is being depleted as well. Poaching is yet another hurdle on their road to recovery. Their fur is highly valued in some cultures and they are being hunted to help supply the illegal pet trade.

Sedgwick County Zoo is proud to welcome a female red panda to Wichita for the grand opening of the Slawson Family Tiger Trek. Her new home will provide her with several elevated climbing structures and even hollow logs she can curl up in if she so desires. She will also have access to a hollow denning log equipped with its own air conditioner,



which will help make her more comfortable during the hot Kansas summers. If you come out during the day, it's likely you will see her lounging around in her tree or in the hollow logs. Since red pandas are typically more active during the morning and evening hours, you might want to take advantage of our later hours during Twilight Tuesdays. Beginning the first week of June and lasting through the month of August, the Zoo will be open until 8:30 p.m. every Tuesday evening. This may give you a unique opportunity to fully observe a panda that is lesser, but still very amazing.

The Sedgwick County Zoo is a not-for-profit organization, accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). Look for the AZA logo whenever you visit a zoo or aquarium as your assurance that you are supporting a facility dedicated to providing excellent care for animals, a great experience for you and a better future for all living things. With its more than 200 accredited members, AZA is a leader in global wildlife conservation and your link to helping animals in their native habitats. For more information, visit www.aza.org. Sedgwick County Zoo is also a member of the World Association of Zoos and Aquariums www.waza.org. Sedgwick County Zoo has been recognized with national and international awards for its support of field conservation programs and successful breeding of rare and endangered species. It's the No. 1 outdoor family tourist attraction in Kansas and is home to more than 2,500 animals of nearly 400 different species. For more information, visit www.scz.org.

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