

# Buttonwood Park Zoo welcomes female Red Panda

The Buttonwood Park Zoo is now home to not one, but two, endangered red pandas.

In its monumental 125th year of operation, the Buttonwood Park Zoo opened its very first red panda habitat by welcoming a young red panda named Jacob. Jacob arrived in June of 2018 from Cleveland Metroparks Zoo and has easily been the SouthCoast's cutest resident ever since.

Jacob wasn't able to hold that title alone for long! In May of 2019, Marie, the Zoo's newest red panda, arrived and began her mandatory 30 day quarantine period. Marie was born in the Greenville Zoo in South Carolina on June 12, 2018. Marie and Jacob enjoyed a joint "birthday party" to celebrate their 1st and 2nd birthday respectively with frozen biscuit cakes and brand new enrichment items. While both red pandas are sweet and inquisitive, Marie is more agile, adventurous and is the first one to try new things.

Marie was brought to New Bedford based on a recommendation as part of the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA) Species Survival Plan (SSP), which the Buttonwood Park Zoo is actively participating in. The goal of the SSP is to cooperatively manage animal populations to ensure the sustainability of a healthy and genetically diverse population while enhancing the conservation of this species in the wild.

Red pandas reach sexual maturity around 1  $\frac{1}{2}$  years of age and in the northern hemisphere, they breed in January–February and give birth in June–July.

"As the Zoo celebrates its 125th anniversary, we are excited to introduce red pandas to our community for the first time," said Buttonwood Park Zoo Executive Director, Keith Lovett.

“While at the Zoo, guests will be able to witness these beautiful, playful animals and learn what the Zoo is doing to help protect this endangered species.”

Red pandas, which are native to Bhutan, China, India, Myanmar and Nepal, are listed as Endangered. They are faced with threats from habitat loss, illegal hunting, trapping and poaching. There are fewer than 10,000 red pandas living in the wild today with less than 220 in AZA accredited institutions, one of which is the Buttonwood Park Zoo.

Red pandas live in high-altitude temperate forests with bamboo understories. Primarily bamboo eaters, red pandas need to eat 20-30% of their body weight each day due to the high amount of indigestible fiber present in bamboo. Thanks to the success of the Zoo’s new Community Bamboo Program, the animals enjoy various species of bamboo harvested from private landowners throughout the community.

The Zoo offers “Keeper Chats”, an opportunity to learn more about two of the Zoo’s cutest residents, daily at 2:00 pm at the Red Panda Habitat. The Zoo is located at 425 Hawthorn Street in New Bedford and is open from 9:00 am until 5:00 pm daily.