

**CHAMPIONS  
OF THE  
WILD**

**Part 6**

**PANDAS**



The giant panda is one of the most widely loved creatures in the world. Yet, with fewer than 1,000 of these beautiful creatures left in the wild, the panda could disappear forever.

Veterinarian Sue Mainka is a self-proclaimed "pandaholic" who plays a critical role in ensuring the pandas' survival. One of very few Westerners invited to go to China to help save the pandas, Mainka works with local specialists at a conservation centre in Szechwan Province, studying pandas in their wild bamboo-grove habitat and breeding them in captivity in order to boost their dwindling numbers. Sue Mainka could be the pandas' last best hope for survival.

Endangered animals – and the champions who have dedicated their lives to saving them – feature in this spectacular series of 13 half-hour videos! Stunningly shot around the world, from the frozen ice fields of Canada's North to the jungles of Borneo, **Champions of the Wild** combines fascinating natural history with the intrigue of personal drama.

Director: **Chris Aikenhead**

Producers: **Christian Bruyère and Ian Herring** (Omni Film),  
**George Johnson** (NFB)

Executive Producer: **Michael Chechik** (Omni Film)

**25 minutes**

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**VHS**

**C9197 102**

**CHAMPIONS  
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**Part 6**

**PANDAS**

**AS SEEN ON  
DISCOVERY  
AND  
ANIMAL  
PLANET**



**A NATIONAL FILM BOARD OF CANADA RELEASE**

# PANDAS

## Part 6

Finding the answer to the problem of co-existing with 1.2 billion people in China is how the panda will be saved.

In the heart of China, on the edge of the Tibetan plateau, are the spectacular mountains of Wolong, one of the last refuges on earth for the giant panda. With their gentle nature and irresistible appeal, pandas are a symbol for conservation around the world. Yet they are also one of the most critically endangered species on the planet — and, despite two decades of global concern, panda populations in the wild continue to decline.

Pandas are not bears, but are actually a unique species that has evolved extraordinary adaptations to its environment. With a diet almost exclusively of bamboo, pandas have powerful jaws, a special digestive system and a distinctive pseudo-thumb, all engineered for exploiting the sole plant that keeps them alive. With the steady chipping away at China's bamboo groves, however, the panda's habitat has been drastically reduced.

Dr. Sue Mainka is a self-proclaimed "pandaholic" and one of the very few Westerners invited by the Chinese to help in the conservation effort. At the Wolong Nature Reserve in Szechwan province, Dr. Mainka has worked with local specialists since 1987. They have pursued a two-pronged approach to saving the giant panda: studying the elusive animal in the wild to better understand its needs for survival, and developing a captive breeding program to bolster dwindling populations. With her Chinese colleagues, she has developed new techniques to help give pandas at the research center in Wolong a fighting chance. Despite the on-going problems with disappearing habitat and sporadic poaching, Sue Mainka doesn't despair: "Everybody asks me if I think the panda's going to survive, and being an optimist I have to say I wouldn't be here if I didn't have hope."

### PRE-VIEWING QUESTIONS

Locate China, the province of Szechwan and Wolong on a map. Based on the longitude and latitude of Wolong, how does Wolong's climate compare to the climate where you live?

Why were pandas selected as the symbol for endangered animals?

### POST-VIEWING QUESTIONS

Pandas eat a very specific diet that is not found all over the world; what is this diet? What does bamboo look like and how does it grow?

Draw a panda and describe its personality. Why were they often used as entertainment acts in circuses?

How is human population growth affecting panda survival in the wild? Why is the captive breeding program so important to the survival of the panda?

What role does the veterinarian play in the care of, and research on, pandas?



Champion:  
Dr. Sue Mainka

**Champions of the Wild** is a spectacular 13-part series featuring endangered animals and the champions who have dedicated their lives to saving them.

Produced by  
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with the participation of  
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in association with  
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### WORLD WIDE WEB SITES:

Information and pictures of panda bears  
<http://www.nature-net.com/bears/panda.html>

An endangered species profile  
[http://www.seaworld.org/nature\\_at\\_risk/casepandaes.html](http://www.seaworld.org/nature_at_risk/casepandaes.html)

Information and pictures about panda bears  
<http://www.wwfcanada.org/facts/panda.html>

### CHAMPIONS OF THE WILD SERIES:

**Part 1: SHARKS** (C9197 096): From their research station on Bimini Island in the Bahamas, Tim Calver and his mentor, Dr. Sam Gruber, are committed to changing the world's negative perception of sharks.

**Part 2: GORILLAS** (C9197 104): In the dangerous surroundings of Rwanda's Volcanoes National Park, Dr. Pascale Sicotte risks her life to protect one of the world's last remaining populations of mountain gorillas.

**Part 3: GRIZZLIES** (C9197 093): Wayne McCrory has spent the last 25 years passionately campaigning to protect the grizzly and rare white spirit bears of the British Columbia rain forest.

**Part 4: WOLVES** (C9197 103): Dr. Paul Paquet studies the harmful effects of wolves coming into contact with civilization and has succeeded in reintroducing wolf packs into the southern Alberta Rockies.

**Part 5: HUMPBACKS** (C9197 099): Dr. Jim Darling, a leading authority on humpback whales, follows the migration of these magnificent creatures in order to protect them in their Pacific environment.

**Part 6: PANDAS** (C9197 102): A self-proclaimed "pandaholic," Dr. Sue Mainka helps the Chinese make critical breakthroughs in raising captive pandas.

**Part 7: LEMURS** (C9197 105): Dr. Lisa Gould's mission is to protect the ring-tailed lemurs of Madagascar and to make the world aware of these obscure primates.

**Part 8: ORCAS** (C9197 100): Radical researcher and visionary Dr. Paul Spong, having researched killer whales for over three decades, helps us understand how humans affect orca habitat and behaviour.

**Part 9: POLAR BEARS** (C9197 095): Biologist and photographer Dr. Dan Guravich has a love affair with the polar bear. His thousands of photographs have profoundly influenced our understanding of the world's largest land-based carnivore.

**Part 10: DOLPHINS** (C9197 097): Diane Claridge and Ken Balcomb are leaders in the fight to free the planet's imprisoned dolphins and whales and return them to the wild.

**Part 11: SWIFT FOXES** (C9197 094): Clio Smeeton has dedicated her life to completing her parents' dream of reintroducing the once-extinct swift fox to its Canadian Prairie home.

**Part 12: RIGHT WHALES** (C9197 101): By policing the Bay of Fundy and educating those who use the world's waterways, Deborah Tobin and Dr. Moira Brown are dedicated to saving the northern right whales, the planet's rarest marine mammal.

**Part 13: ORANGUTANS** (C9197 098): Activist researcher Dr. Biruté Galdikas lives in the gruelling jungles of Borneo and Sumatra, fighting to save the increasingly threatened orangutan.