

# Pere David's deer ... a posterchild for zoo conservation!

ASSOCIATION  
OF ZOOS  
AQUARIUMS &  
CERVID TAG



## MEASUREMENTS

**Length:** 6-7 feet

**Height:** 3.5-4.5 feet  
at shoulder

**Weight:** 300-500 lbs



Grasslands



(China)

IUCN  
EXTINCT IN  
THE WILD

~600 are  
reestablished

## Why exhibit Pere David's deer?

- Demonstrate the importance of *ex situ* breeding programs in preventing extinction. This species was already extinct in the wild when described to western science in 1865, and was hunted to extinction in its final refuge in China (the Nan Hai-Tzu Imperial Park) in 1900. It survives only thanks to ongoing zoo breeding programs.
- Add a cold-hardy cornerstone species to Asian-themed exhibits. Pere David's deer mix well with many other hoofstock species and provide a year-round exhibit in virtually every climate.
- Let visitors get hands-on with the impressive and unusual "backwards" antlers of males. This species sometimes sheds and regrows TWO sets of antlers per year - the only deer to do so!
- Ignite curiosity with the riddle in the Chinese name of this deer: *sì bù xiàng*, meaning "none of the four." Which parts of what four species did the ancient Chinese see in this deer?!

## Stewardship Opportunities

WWF China - Living Yangtze (Habitat stewardship)  
[en.wwfchina.org/en/what\\_we\\_do/living\\_yangtze/](http://en.wwfchina.org/en/what_we_do/living_yangtze/)

## Care and Husbandry

**YELLOW SSP:** 50.78 (128) in 15 institutions (2018)

**Species coordinator:** Beth Schille, Disney's Animal Kingdom  
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**Social nature:** Highly social, and can be kept in large groups. Multiple males can be housed with females in sufficiently large enclosures.

**Mixed species:** Mixes well with a variety of other hoofstock, including other deer, antelope, equids, wild cattle, takin, and birds.

**Housing:** Tolerant of both hot and cold climates. Basic shelter from the elements (without supplemental heat) is generally sufficient.

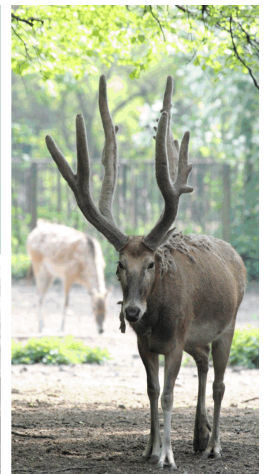
**Medical notes:** Typically hardy with few medical issues. However, this species appears to be highly susceptible to sheep-associated MCF (over half of a group imported to New Zealand died from MCF).

**Special requirements:** Pere David's deer are strong swimmers and enjoy water features and mud wallows, especially during hot weather. Males can become very aggressive or persistent during rut; females should be provided with creep or hide areas.

**Keeper resources:** Easy to care for and work around; less fractious than other deer. Shifting facilities recommended for males in rut.

Please contact the TAG for full husbandry guidelines.

<http://www.azaungulates.org/>



Photos by B.Huffman. Published June 2019.