

《新冠期间动物园没人来，香港的大熊猫终于自然交配了》

If the world wants more pandas to 'get it on', perhaps all we humans need to do is get out the way.

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Far from the prying eyes of the public, two captive giant pandas in a closed Hong Kong zoo are making up for lost time with a whole lotta boning. Well, not a whole lot. Just once, but for this particular couple that's something to celebrate.

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In the 10 years Ying Ying and Le Le have known each other, they've never once gotten down and dirty. And yet, this breeding season, amid a global pandemic, something between them seemed to change.



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In late March, after a month or so of unusual privacy, Ying Ying began spending more time in the water. Meanwhile, Le Le began leaving a trail of scents around his habitat, actively searching for his companion's smell all the while. On Monday the two were seen cuddling. Love was clearly in the air.

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At 9am, the deed was done and dusted, according to zoo officials.

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Nevertheless, the zoo made no mention of the coincidental timing, only that the pandas had clearly learned to copulate after years upon years of "trial".

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So is this a sign we should leave pandas alone more if we want them to procreate in future?

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Despite their reputation, zoologists have long argued pandas don't actually have as low a sex drive in the wild as they show in captivity; they're actually quite frisky beings.

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"It is a phoney issue to say that pandas face a breeding crisis that we have to solve," Jim Harkness, a panda expert and the former China representative for the World Wide Fund for Nature, told The Guardian back in 2006.

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