

'Pandas' IMAX Movie Opens at Maritime Aquarium

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Take a giant-screen journey to China to watch as a “bear whisperer” from New Hampshire helps a young panda learn to live in the wild in “Pandas,” a new IMAX movie opened Thursday, April 6 at The Maritime Aquarium at Norwalk.

Filled with scenes of the adorable black-and-white baby bears, “Pandas” will play at noon and 2 and 4 p.m. daily in Connecticut’s largest IMAX theater, with a screen that’s six stories high. (Times will shift on June 30.)

— *an announcement from the* [Maritime Aquarium](#)

“Pandas” arrives with excellent pedigree, having been made by the same team that created “Born to Be Wild,” one of the most popular movies ever shown at The Maritime Aquarium.

(The Aquarium is the fifth-highest-grossing theater in the world for “Born to Be Wild,” a 2011 release that follows efforts to rescue and reintroduce orphaned baby elephants and orangutans back into the wild.)

This new IMAX film travels to Chengdu Panda Base in China, where scientists breed adult giant pandas in order to introduce the cubs into the wild. Those and other efforts have stabilized the panda population, to the point that the International Union for Conservation of Nature changed its listing for giant pandas in 2016 from “Endangered” to “Vulnerable.”

However, the IUCN also notes:

“The optimism engendered by these positive trends is dampened by evidence indicating that some panda populations are decreasing, particularly those found in the smallest and most degraded habitat patches ...”

Threats include climate change, habitat loss, population fragmentation, and human intrusion.

“Pandas” introduces audiences to Rong Hou, a researcher at the Chengdu Panda Base whose passion leads her to initiate a new technique inspired by the work of Ben Kilham, the only licensed bear rehabilitator in New Hampshire.

Over the last 20 years, Kilham — nicknamed “the bear whisperer” — has rescued more than 150 orphaned black bear cubs and developed a successful technique for preparing the bears for life on their own in the woods.

What starts as a cross-culture collaboration becomes a life-changing journey for Hou, Kilham and a very curious female panda cub named Qian Qian (pronounced chee-an chee-an).

Follow Qian Qian on an exciting new adventure in the mountains of Sichuan, as she takes her first steps outside her protected habitat, discovering her true animal nature, even as she faces the challenges of the unknown.

“Pandas” is narrated by actress Kristen Bell.

“Pandas’ not only spotlights the important work being done to protect these beloved and ridiculously cute animals, but it provides us with inspiration and hope and showcases the great things we can achieve when we work together,” Bell said in a statement.

David Douglas and Drew Fellman, the filmmakers behind “Born to Be Wild,” directed “Pandas,” which Fellman wrote and produced. Douglas served as director of photography. “Born to Be Wild” composer Mark Mothersbaugh (co-founder of Devo) collaborated again with Douglas and Fellman on this film’s soundtrack.

Also showing daily on the IMAX screen is “Backyard Wilderness” at 11 a.m. and 1 and 3 p.m. Filmed in Croton-on-Hudson in Westchester County, N.Y., the film celebrates the wonders of nature we can enjoy right outside our homes, if only we would put down our devices.

One IMAX movie is included with admission to The Maritime Aquarium, which is \$24.95 for adults, \$22.95 for seniors (65+), and \$17.95 for children (3-12). Kids under 3 are free.

View movie trailers, buy tickets to skip the lines, and get more details at [the aquarium website](#).