

Characteristics of different types of bears



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The Bear is a mammal belonging to family Ursidae and is characterised by shaggy coat, a short tail and walk with both heel and sole touching the ground. Bears are exploring, intelligent but potentially dangerous animals and are killed each year by people. If we show respect to bears and learn proper behavior once in their kingdom this will help if you encounter a bear. Bears tend to avoid humans. But it is dangerous to meet a bear suddenly in the forest as bears do not like surprises. Many bears live in Alaska and many people enjoy the outdoors, but surprisingly few people even see bears. Make noise, sing, talk loudly while moving in the bear country. Travel with a group as groups are noisier and easier for bears to detect. Always avoid thick bush. The presence of these mighty beasts acts like a defence against the forest destruction. Avoid trails and roads and never set up camp close to a trail that might be used by bears. Avoid areas having carcasses, waste food matter as bears may be in these areas and bears do not like surprises. If a bear approaches while you are fishing, stop fishing. Don't give food to bears or leave food unattended as the smell of these may compel a bear to reach the

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place. Bears eat aggressively as they have only six months to build up fat reserves for their winter hibernation.

ASIATIC BEAR

The Asiatic bear also known as the Himalayan black bear, the Tibetan black bear species lives in Asian countries like Afghanistan, Malaysia, Cambodia, China, India, Iran, Russia and Taiwan. They are American black bear's closest cousin and both are believed to be evolved from a common European ancestor. It can be found in areas with elevations as high as 4,700 m (13,776 ft), but in lower lands as well. In some parts of its range, the Asian Black Bear shares its habitat with the larger and stronger Brown Bear.

Asiatic bears have the following characters- black color having a whitish or creamy colored 'Y' on their chest, large ears, extra long and fluffy hair around neck and shoulders. Asiatic black bears grow four to six feet long. Males weigh from 220 to 480 pounds, while females range from 110 to 275 pounds. The Asiatic black bear is listed as vulnerable on the World Conservation Union's (IUCN's) Red List of Threatened Animals. The main threats are habitat loss and deforestation. These bears are more fierce than other species and will attack humans if threatened. In the summer they make "nests" in trees for sleeping and use twigs to make comfortable beds in the snow in winter. The Asian Black Bear is an omnivore which consumes a great variety of foods and are opportunistic and seasonal in diet. Asiatic black bears take advantage of a variety of foods, primarily from plants.

In winter, they ate chestnuts, walnuts, and other fat-rich resources. In spring, new plant growth provides a bounty for the bears. Other plants offer food in

summer, including raspberries, cherries, and grasses. Insect food, especially ants, augments the summer diet. Asiatic black bears will eat carrion, and sometimes attack livestock.

Asiatic black bears do not usually breed until three or four years old. Young stay with their mothers for two to three years, and females with first-year young do not usually breed till the next season. These bears migrate seasonally stay at higher elevation in summers and inhabit lower places in winters.

Besides habitat destruction, Asian Black Bears are also threatened by hunting, especially for their gall bladders to obtain bile, which is used in traditional Chinese medicine.

THE POLAR BEARS

Polar bears belong to the class mammals and found in the North Pole, Tundra, Greenland and Norway. The polar bear or the sea/ice bear are the world's largest land predators. The white brown color of their fur gives them this look. They are very powerful animals and can weigh up to 800 kg. The head is smaller in appearance. Polar bears inhabit one of the planet's coldest environments and depend on a thick coat of insulated fur which protects them from cold. Today, 25, 000 to 40, 000 polar bears roam the Arctic. Male polar bears may grow 10 feet tall and weigh over 1400 pounds. Females reach seven feet and weigh 650 pounds. In the wild polar bears live up to age 25.

Around the age of four or five the female Males are bigger in size than females. Polar bears have different structure of their feet as compared to

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those bears which live on tropical parts as they have to move on glass like sliding surfaces. Polar bears are nomadic predators who roam extensive areas for the purpose of eating. A polar bear keeps on shifting from one place to other. They have very good swimming ability and can swim many miles without any halt. Polar bears have strong respiratory body organs which enable them to stay beneath water for long periods. Polar bears prey on seals mainly but at times they eat wolves and reindeers and also consume carcasses, such as those of dead whales. They have strong smell sense and can identify the flesh from as long as 30 miles. The mating occurs in mid-summer. The number of bears born to female bear is generally four to five. The females take the responsibility of their young ones and receive no help from their solitary male mates. Females aggressively protect their young. The cubs are protected by their mother until they become able to survive by themselves.

Polar bears are treated because of habitat loss. Oil spills can be very dangerous. A bear with oil on its coat cannot regulate its body temperature properly. If the bear eats the oil while grooming it could die. Man made pollution is also a cause of death. At each stage of the food chain, pollutants get more concentrated. By the end when the polar bear eats the seal and it could be lethal.

BLACK BEAR

The American Black Bear is about 5-7 feet in length, weighing between 125 and 400 pounds. Its body is large, with a short tail, a long snout, round ears, and small eyes. Its shaggy fur is generally uniformly black colored all over the body apart from its muzzle, which is brown in color, and light colored

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markings that sometimes occur on the chest. Their lifespan can range from 20-30 years in the wild, although most of them do not live beyond their 10th year. Being the smallest amongst the three species of bears that occur in North America, the American Black Bear can be found practically all over the continent, from the Pacific to the Atlantic, and from Canada in the north down to Mexico in the south. While it usually walks on all its four legs, the American Black Bear can walk and stand on its hind legs. Despite the American Black Bear's strength and size, it is quite agile and deliberate when it moves. While they will eat just about anything, the black bear has a preference for nuts, berries, honey, plants, and grass, and also is known to feed on fish, small animals and carrion. Occasionally, they also kill the calves of moose or deer for food. With the onset of fall, the American Black Bear will start gaining a lot of weight by eating enormous amounts of food, so that its body fat reserves sustain it through the hibernation period in the winter. Although, when there is a lull in the cold weather, it will awaken and make brief forays outside to feed. Being highly adaptable, the American Black Bear can be found in a wide variety of habitats. Although it prefers wooded areas that is rich in ground vegetation and has plenty of nuts and fruits, it also occurs in the tundra regions of the north, and sometimes they will even be found foraging in meadows or fields. Except for the mother and her cubs, the American Black Bear has a tendency of being solitary creatures. They will usually be found foraging singly, although if food is available plentifully in an area, they will feed in groups. The survival of the cubs depends completely on the mother's skill of teaching them how and where to find food, what is edible, where to make their den, and where and when to find shelter from the weather or danger.

Although they prefer avoiding man and are regarded as non-aggressive, except when the animal feels threatened, or in order to protect its young, or if it has suffered an injury, many people think wrongly that the black bear is a vicious animal, and hence kill them on sight when they encroach and occupy their habitat and come across them. Another serious threat that menaces the American Black Bear these days is the demand for their paws and gall bladders, which are used for medicinal purposes in Korea, Japan and China. Several states in the US list the American Black Bear as endangered, threatened, or rare (although they continue to be hunted in some states as game). Nevertheless, they are still in danger. The name black bear is not a very accurate name for this species of bear. They can come in many colors such as black, brown, gray, silvery-blue, and cream. Most black bears are, in fact, black but often a black colored bear will have brown cubs and brown colored bears may have black cubs. The black bear's habitats range from the far northern tundra of Canada and Alaska to the forests of Central America and Mexico. They are considered to be large to medium sized (males weighing between 56. 7-226 kg or 130-500 lbs.), males being larger than females, and the different sub-species are similar in their body shape, footprints and diets. They like nutrition and protein rich foods like termites, bees and moths. They eat berries, nuts, acorns, honey and fruit. Because bears are not active predators they prefer to eat carrion. Carrion is especially important for bears that have just come out of hibernation and are in great need of protein. Black bears have been given the reputation of attacking people. This is not true. Black bears, like most other bears, will rarely attack humans. They will try to scare off danger by standing on their back feet, baring their teeth, and growling. They may attack if their cubs are in danger

but only as a last resort and sometimes not even then. Mating happens in spring but the females have an ability called 'delayed implantation', which allows the egg to be fertilized later. This is so that the cub, or cubs, will be born during hibernation. The Kermode bear is found only in British Columbia, Canada, and is black, most of the time. About 1 out of every 10 Kermode bears is pure white. They are not Polar bears, nor are they sub-species of the Polar bear. These rare white bears are called Spirit Bears. In every other way they are like all the other black bears except that they carry a special gene that causes their hair to be white rather than black.

BROWN BEAR

The Brown Bear is a large bear distributed across much of northern Eurasia and North America. It weighs 100 to 700 kg (220-1,500 pounds) and its larger populations such as the Kodiak bear match the Polar bear as the largest extant land predator. While the brown bear's range has shrunk, and it has faced local extinctions, it remains listed as a least concern species, with a total population of approximately 200,000. Its principal range countries are Russia, the United States (especially Alaska), Canada, and Finland where it is the national animal. The species primarily feeds on vegetable matter, including roots, and fungi. Fish are a primary source of meat. It also eats small land mammals and occasionally larger mammals, such as deer. Adult brown bears can match wolf packs and large felines, often driving them off their kills. The largest populations are in Russia, with 120,000, the United States with 32,500, and Canada with 21,750. 95% of the brown bear population in the United States is in Alaska, though in the West they are

repopulating slowly but steadily along the Rockies and plains. The brown bear is Finland's national animal.

Brown bears were once native to Asia, the Atlas Mountains in Africa, Europe and North America, but are now extinct in some areas and their populations have greatly decreased in other areas. They prefer semi-open country, usually in mountainous areas.

Brown bears live in Alaska, east through the Yukon and Northwest Territories, south through British Columbia and through the western half of Alberta. Small populations exist in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem of northwest Wyoming (with about 600 animals), the Northern Continental Divide Ecosystem of northwest Montana (with about 400-500 animals), the Cabinet-Yaak Ecosystem of northwest Montana and northeast Idaho (with about 30-40 animals), the Selkirk Ecosystem of northeast Washington and northwest Idaho (with about 40-50 animals), and the North Cascades Ecosystem of north-central Washington (with about 5-10 animals). These five ecosystems combine for a total of roughly 1, 200 wild grizzlies still persisting in the contiguous United States. Unfortunately, these populations are isolated from each other, inhibiting any genetic flow to occur between ecosystems. This poses one of the greatest threats to the future survival of the grizzly bear in the contiguous United States.

In Arctic areas, the potential habitat of the brown bear is increasing. The warming of that region has allowed the species to move farther north into what was once exclusively the domain of the polar bear. In non-Arctic areas, habitat loss is blamed as the leading cause of endangerment, followed by

hunting. North American brown bears seem to prefer open landscapes, whereas in Eurasia they inhabit mostly dense forests. It is thought that the Eurasian bears which colonized America were tundra-adapted.

The brown bear is primarily nocturnal. In the summer it gains up to 180 kg (400 pounds) of fat, on which it relies to make it through winter, when it becomes very lethargic. Although they are not full hibernators, and can be woken easily, both sexes like to den in a protected spot such as a cave, crevice, or hollow log during the winter months. Brown bear are mostly solitary, although they may gather in large numbers at major food sources and form social hierarchies based on age and size.

They are omnivores and feed on a variety of plant products, including berries, roots, and sprouts, fungi as well as meat products such as fish, insects, and small mammals. Despite their reputation, most brown bears are not particularly carnivorous as they derive up to 90% of their dietary food energy from vegetable matter.

Their jaw structure has evolved to fit their dietary habits. Their diet varies enormously throughout their differing ranges. Brown bears also occasionally prey on deer, elk, moose, caribou, and bison. When brown bears attack these animals, they tend to choose the young ones because they are much easier to catch. . On rare occasions, bears kill by hitting their prey with their powerful forearms which can break the necks and backs of large prey, such as bison. They also feed on carrion and use their size to intimidate other predators such as wolves, cougars, tigers and black bears from their kills. Bears become attracted to human-created food sources such as garbage

dumps, litter bins, and dumpsters; they venture into human dwellings or barns in search of food as humans encroach into bear habitat. Yellowstone National Park, an enormous reserve located in the Western United States, contains prime habitat for the Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*), and due to the enormous number of visitors, human-bear encounters are common. The scenic beauty of the area has led to an influx of people moving into the area.

While the black bear is found only throughout North & Central America, the brown bear family is spread all over the world. They live in dense forests in mountains, valleys and meadows and can be found in Canada, in central regions of the U. S. and throughout Europe and Asia. The entrance of a Brown Bear's den is a tunnel that goes down to a small ' bedroom'. The female bear will hibernate all winter long, not even waking up to give birth! The baby cubs will find their way to their mother's chest and nurse and sleep until the mother bear wakes up. By the time she does wake up her teeny little cubs are much larger and quite playful! The den will probably be used only once.

SLOTH BEAR

The Sloth Bear also known as the Lip Bear, is a mammal of the which is native to the lowland forests of India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bhutan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka. The Sloth Bear is the only bear species classified in genus *Melursus*.

The body is 150-190 cm long, covered in long, shaggy fur, ranging from auburn to black, with a distinctive " V"-shaped white mark on the chest, a

whitish snout and black nose. The snout is long with bare lips and a lack of upper incisors, adaptations for its insect-based diet. The front feet are turned inwards and have 4 inch long, non-retractable, curved claws that are adapted for digging and climbing. The males, weighing 80-140 kg, are larger than the females, which weigh only 55-95 kg. Its pugmarks are very similar to a human footprint. The tail is 15-18 cm (6-7 inches) long, the longest in the bear family. Their natural lifespan is unknown, however, a captive specimen was recorded to have lived 40 years. Female Sloth Bears typically give birth to two cubs in December-early January. The cubs are typically born in a cave or under large boulders,] where they remain for two to three months, and continue to accompany the mother for at least a further two years. The cubs attain independence at the age of 24-36 months. Sloth bears are the most nocturnal of bears, though sows with cubs will often move in daylight. They do not hibernate. Sloth bears are excellent climbers, and will stay in trees to feed and rest, though not to escape danger.

The Sloth Bear primarily eats ants and termites, breaking into termite mounds with large powerful claws and eating the occupants. It uses its long tubular snout to blow away dirt and suck up the insects, the sounds of which can be heard from 100 meters away. It may also eat honey, eggs, birds, flowers, tubers, fruits, grains and meat. The animal's fondness for honey has caused it to be nicknamed the Honey bear.

Sloth bear are often nocturnal and occur at low densities, so determining how many bears are found in a particular area or monitoring their status is difficult. Sloth bear are known for their propensity for eating ants and termites, and also eat various fruits from forest trees and shrubs. The

availability of these foods varies through the year. Ant and termite colonies are more abundant and nutritious when there is brood inside during the monsoon and the following cool season. Each fruiting plant has its season. . Female sloth bears will have one or two babies and will raise them for the first 2-3 years of their lives. The male will stick around with his family and help take care of the cubs. The sloth bear has a shaggy coat that is usually black with a ' Y' shaped white color down its chest. They live in the evergreen forests and grasslands of India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burma and Nepal. They are popular in those countries but not for good reasons. These are the bears that are captured and trained (often tortured) to entertain people as the famous dancing bears. They are also hunted for their body parts to be used in traditional medicines. And, sadly, because their habitat is shrinking due to growing human population, they go looking for food on farmland and are killed by farmers protecting their crops and animals.

SUN BEAR

The sun bear is one of the smallest bears, at around 1. 4 meters (4. 5 ft long) and weighing up to 100 lbs. They have short, sleek black fur with an orange-yellow horseshoe shape of color on their chest. In some folktales it is said that this shape represents the rising sun. They are also known as honey bears and Malayan sun bears. A sun bear's diet consists of lizards, little birds, rodents, insects, termites, fruit and honey. The long sharp claws of the sun bear are handy for tearing open trees where insect and bee nests can be found and slurped up using their extra long tongue. Because they live in tropical temperatures, sun bears do not need to hibernate and are able to mate at any time of year. Unlike North American bears, male and female sun

bears may hang out or live together while raising the cubs. Sun bears will usually have two cubs at a time and care for them for two years until they are old enough to survive on their own. Sun bears have loose skin that allows them to twist when being bitten, so as to bite an attacker. They also have very strong legs that are great for climbing. These characteristics help this bear protect itself from tigers and other possible predators. The sun bear can be found in the tropical rainforests of southeastern Asia . They are hunted for their meat and their body parts which are used for medicine. Cubs are often taken from their mothers and kept as pets.

The reclusive sun bear, smallest member of the bear family, lives an insular life in the dense lowland forests of Southeast Asia.

Found from southern China to eastern India and as far south as Indonesia, sun bears, also called Malayan sun bears, take their name from the bib-shaped golden or white patch on their chest, which legend says represents the rising sun. They have a stocky, muscular build, small ears, and a short muzzle, which has earned them the nickname “ dog bear. “. Males, slightly larger than females, are about 5 feet (1. 5 meters) in length and weigh up to 150 pounds (70 kilograms), a stature which suits their arboreal lifestyle and allows them to move easily through the trees.

Ironically, sun bears are nocturnal. They lumber through the forests by night, snacking on fruits, berries, roots, insects, small birds, lizards, and rodents. They have an excellent sense of smell and extremely long claws, exceeding four inches (ten centimeters) in length, which they use to rip open trees and

termite nests. They also have an almost comically long tongue for extracting honey from bee nests, giving them their other nickname, “ honey bear. “

Because of their remote habitat and shy personality, there is currently not enough data to determine if sun bears are in danger of extinction, but scientists fear the worst. Their homelands are being lost rapidly to deforestation, poachers hunt them mercilessly for body parts and fur, and some farmers kill them on site because they often eat crops such as oil palm, coconuts, and bananas. Adult females are also frequently killed so their cubs can be taken and raised as pets.