



**Black Bear**

### Taxonomy

Kingdom:	Animalia	anima = soul, spirit
Phylum:	Chordata	chord = a string, musical instrument. Chordata = having a notocord or "back-string"
Class:	Mammalia	mamm = breast, pap, teats
Order:	Carnivora	carn = flesh
Family:	Urisidae	
Sub-family:	Ursinae	
Genus:	Ursus	
Species:	americanus	

<b>Range</b>	Black bears are widely distributed in forested areas from northern Mexico, every US state except Hawaii, and Canada. They are highly adaptable and live in both arid and moist forests from sea level to 3000 ft.
<b>Predators</b>	Brown bears. People intensively hunt black bears. In most of the states and provinces that these bears range, they are treated as a game animal, regulated by hunting. An estimated 30,000 individuals are killed annually in North America.
<b>Prey</b>	Black bears are omnivorous (vegetation and meat). They feed on a wide range of foods including; insects (particularly ants), nuts, berries, acorns, grasses, roots, and other vegetation. They are also efficient predators of deer fawns and moose calves. Black bears are not active predators, but opportunistic feeders.
<b>Size</b>	Males range in from about 130 to 190 centimeters (50 to 75 inches) in length, weigh 60 to 300 kilograms (130-660 pounds). Females range from 130-190 centimeters (50 to 75 inches) in length, and weigh 40 to 80 kilograms (90 to 175 pounds). They are considerably lighter in weight in the spring when they emerge from their dens.
<b>Life Span</b>	The average life span of black bears is 12-18 years in the wild and up to 30 in captivity.
<b>Reproduction</b>	Black bears reach sexual maturity at three to six years of age. Mating occurs during summer months and pregnancy last about seven months. Cubs are born in maternity dens in the winter (usually January/February). Females may give birth to as many as five cubs, but two is the average. Cubs are born blind and hairless. When they leave the dens in the spring, they have a wooly coat and weigh about five pounds (2.3kg).
<b>Seasonal Change</b>	These bears consume large quantities of food in the fall, and then they move into “dens” and sleep through most of the winter. This is not a true hibernation, their body temperatures remain high, and most of their body functions continue. If winter weather is mild, the bears may be awake and active for short periods of time. Black bears are crepuscular, they are active at twilight. However, the need to feed and breeding may sometimes affect this behavior.
<b>Morphology and Function</b>	Their claws are short , curved and not more then 1-11/2 inches in length. They are used for climbing trees. Brown bears, on the other hand, have much longer, straighter claws used for heavy digging. Black bears have a “flat” back, brown bears have a shoulder hump, a muscle developed from digging.
<b>Unique Facts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are eight species of bears found world wide. Six of these are considered threatened or endangered.</li> <li>• Bear populations around the world have declined due to loss of habitat and excessive killing by man.</li> <li>• Black bears are the smallest bears in North America.</li> </ul>

Stirling, Ian. 1993. *Bears, Majestic Creatures of the Wild*. Emmaus, Pennsylvania: Rodale Press.