

Black Bears in the U.S.

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Black Bear

Ursus Americanus

Physical Characteristics

- Black, brown, blond, or cinnamon in color. Black with a light brown snout is the most common coloration in Yellowstone National Park.
- Average weight in Yellowstone is 100-300 pounds, with males usually larger than females.
- Height is 2.5-3 feet at the shoulder when standing on all fours and 5 feet when standing upright.
- Rump is higher than front shoulders.
- Face profile is straight; muzzle is relatively long. Ears are long and prominent.

Behavior

- Usually less aggressive than grizzlies.
- Cubs:- weigh about one-half pound at birth-Stay with their mother up to 1.5 years.
- Black bears often make dens under roots of trees at low to middle elevations.
- Active mainly from dawn to dusk, but may be active any time of day or night.

Excellent tree-climbing ability is used-to escape predators-to feed on nuts and fruit in trees.

Distribution

- Black Bears once ranged widely-from the Atlantic to the Pacific oceans and from the tree line in the northern Arctic to northern Mexico.
- Currently exist in 75% of their former range, and are not listed as threatened as are grizzlies.
- Have shown more ability to live near people than have brown or polar bears; some live in forest habitats not as far from cities.
- Primarily forest creatures, black bears rarely travel far from the shelter of trees.
- Black bears frequent areas of mixed woodland and small meadows in the sub-alpine zone.
- Black bears are returning to many forested areas near major cities.