



Wildlife Express!

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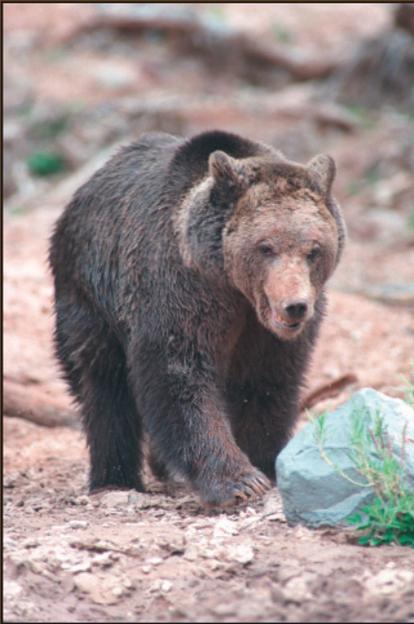


Great
Grizzlies



Let's Look At...

Grizzly Bears



A large and powerful animal lives in Idaho. It is curious, intelligent and has a wonderful memory. It is the grizzly bear.

Lewis and Clark would probably think the grizzly bear's scientific name, *Ursus arctos horribilis*, fits the bear well. When a bear is running at you as fast as a horse, it probably looks horrible! Lewis and Clark wrote about many encounters with angry bears, but they caused many of the problems by shooting at the bears first. Grizzlies usually keep to themselves. They only become dangerous when they are surprised, associate people with food or when a mother bear feels her cubs are in danger.

Long ago, grizzly bears lived in every part of Idaho. Now they are only found in the northern part of Idaho and in eastern Idaho close to Yellowstone National Park. The best grizzly habitat is a forest that has

meadows and grasslands mixed within it.

Grizzly bears are known for having long claws and a hump between their shoulders. The hump is muscles. The muscles and long claws help grizzly bears dig and tear things apart. This comes in handy when looking for food.

What do grizzlies eat? They eat both animals and plants, but Idaho's grizzly bears eat more plants than anything else. If you made dinner for a grizzly bear, you would serve mostly grasses, nuts, roots, fruits and berries with just a few insects and dead animals. Two foods that grizzlies love are whitebark pine nuts and army cutworm moths. They can eat as many as 40,000 moths a day! Grizzly bears can gain up to 30 pounds each week eating these high fat foods.

To find food, grizzly bears have wonderful senses. Bears see about as well as you do, and they see in color. Just like dogs, bears can hear high pitched sounds. Their hearing is good, but the most important sense for a bear is its sense of smell. Grizzly bears have big noses. Their noses are about 1,000 times more developed than a human's nose. The part of a grizzly's brain that helps with smelling looks like a golf ball with porcupines quills coming out of it. The quills go into gray matter. Gray matter is where memories are stored. Bears remember where food and places are by how they smell!

In about a month, bears will be looking for a place to spend the winter. Grizzlies usually dig out a den under the roots of a tree. Grizzlies stay in their den for five to six months. It's during this time that females give birth to cubs. Usually two cubs are born. A grizzly bear cub weighs less than one pound when it is born, but it will grow quickly. In April or May, it will come out of the den with its mother weighing about 20 pounds.

Grizzly bears are good mothers. They will care for their cubs for two or three years teaching them everything they need to know. They also play with the cubs to help them build strong muscles.

Grizzly bears are a symbol of America's wild places. They are beautiful and powerful animals.

Bears Around the World

Where do you find bears? Just about everywhere! There are eight species, or kinds, of bears – American black bears, polar bears, giant panda bears, Asiatic black bears, sloth bears, spectacled bears, sun bears and grizzly bears, also called brown bears. Bears live on every continent except Africa, Antarctica and Australia. Polar bears, grizzly bears and American black bears live in North America.

Polar bears are the biggest bears. Male polar bears weigh between 700 and 1400 pounds. The biggest polar bear ever recorded was 12 feet long and weighed 2,209 pounds. That's about as heavy as 12 grown men! Polar bears eat more meat than any other bear. Since they live on the frozen ice caps of the Arctic, they have become experts at catching seals. Seals cut holes in the ice so they can surface for air. When a seal pops its head out of a hole to take a breath, it better be careful. A polar bear might be waiting to grab it.

Sun bears, which live in southeast Asia, are the smallest bears. They weigh between 60 to 140 pounds. Sun bears live in hot, tropical rain forests. You might think that since sun bears live in hot forests they would have a thinner layer of fur compared to bears that live in colder climates. Well, their fur is a bit thinner, but it is still about five inches thick! Their loose skin and thick fur help to protect them from predators, like tigers. If a tiger grabbed a sun bear's back, the bear would be able to twist around in its loose skin and bite the tiger. Sun bears are bears that love the trees. They usually sleep in trees and can even give birth to their cubs in trees.

Bears come in many sizes and colors, but they all share some things in common. Male bears are called boars. Female bears are called sows, and babies are called cubs. Bears are mammals. They give birth to living babies, and the babies drink their mother's milk. Bears like to be alone most of the time. You usually only see bears together if it is breeding time or if mothers are caring for cubs.

Bears are such intelligent and interesting animals. Can you think of other traits all bears share?

A Long Winter's Rest....

Have you ever been snowshoeing or cross-country skiing? It's a peaceful way to spend a winter afternoon. A certain kind of hush has fallen over the woods. You might hear birds or see a few animals, but some animals that were out during summer may be a bit more difficult to find.

Many animals are either underground in burrows or hidden in caves. Their body functions slow way down. They don't breathe as often. Their hearts don't beat as often, and there is almost no sign of life. These animals' bodies have sort of turned off for the winter. They may be **hibernating**.

Do you think grizzly bears **hibernate**? Years ago some scientists didn't consider bears "true hibernators". When a bear is sleeping during the winter, its body temperature only drops to about 88 degrees Fahrenheit. Marmots are considered true hibernators. Their temperature drops to 38 degrees Fahrenheit. They almost freeze to death! People used to think that since a bear's body temperature only drops a little, the bear couldn't be a true hibernator.

Today, most scientists call hibernating animals that drop their body temperatures close to freezing, like marmots, "deep hibernators". Deep hibernators have to wake up during the winter to go to the bathroom and eat. Bears can sleep through the entire winter without having to eat or go to the bathroom. That's amazing! It makes bears special. Bear biologists are now starting to call bears "super hibernators".

No matter what words you use, mammals that sleep in the winter have a few things in common. They all need to go into their winter sleep with a thick layer of fat. They eat a lot of food during the summer and fall. Some of the food is stored as brown fat. This special fat is found across the animal's back and shoulders. During the winter, their bodies use the fat like food.

Most animals hibernate and rest during the winter because they can't find enough food. Grizzly bears eat more plants than anything else. Cold weather and snow makes it pretty hard to find juicy fruits and plants in the winter. Actually, bears that live in warmer climates don't hibernate at all. They are able to find enough food all year long to keep themselves alive and healthy.

Can you think of other animals that hibernate during the winter?

What's Your Niche?

Think of the town where you live. People in your community have jobs that make it a nice place to live. There are doctors that keep you healthy. Teachers that help you learn, and people that make food for you to eat.

Animals, plants and other organisms also have jobs and roles to play where they live. This role is called a **niche** (NICH). An animal's niche includes such things as where and how the animal gathers food and its link in a food chain.

Within ecosystems, every living thing has important jobs and roles. If one of these organisms is missing, the ecosystem will be unhealthy. At times, it may be hard to see what an animal's niche is. What about skunks? They just seem like stinky animals that may cause farmers problems. Even the smelly skunk has a role in nature. Skunks eat more insects than anything else. They really love to eat grasshoppers, beetles and moth larvae. Many of the insects skunks eat like to munch on farmer's crops. Skunks help farmers by eating crop pests. The small bit of grass or soil they dig up looking for food is a small price to pay for all the insects they eat.

What's your niche? Do you have an important job or role to play in your family or school?

Where Did the Bears Go?

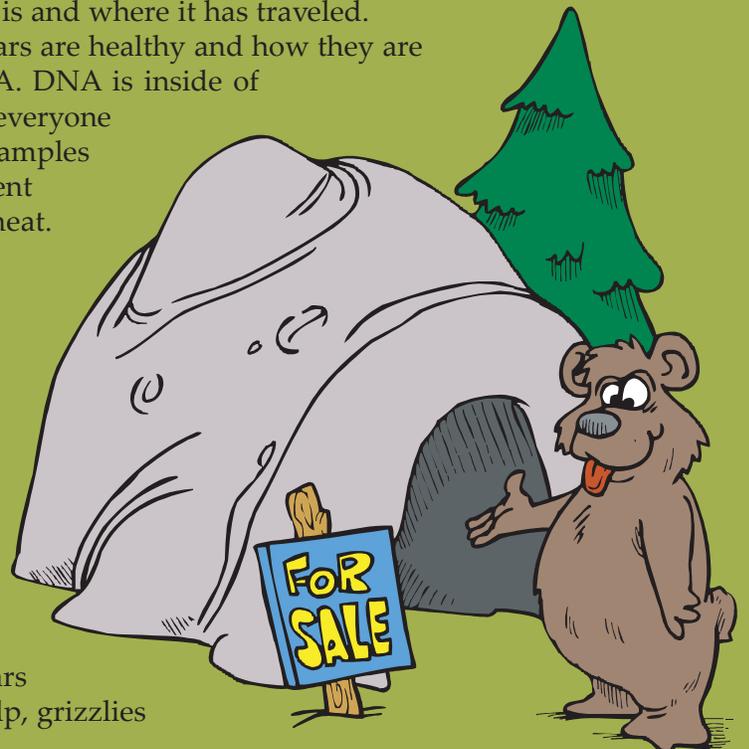
When Lewis and Clark explored the West, more than 50,000 grizzly bears lived between the Pacific Ocean and the Great Plains. When pioneers moved westward, things changed.

Bears ran into people, and bears were killed. As more towns sprang up, the bear's habitat shrank, and so did their numbers. Grizzly numbers went from 50,000 bears to about 1,000 bears. In 1975, grizzly bears were listed as a threatened species in the lower 48 states. Grizzlies were protected everywhere except Alaska where they were still doing well.

We need to learn about grizzlies to help them, and special collars can give biologist information. Bears are captured and fitted with GPS collars. The collars send signals to a satellite and back to Earth. Computers record which collar sent the signal and where on Earth the signal came from. Biologists can then get an idea of where the bear is and where it has traveled.

Another thing biologists need to know is if the bears are healthy and how they are related to each other. Scientists can tell this from DNA. DNA is inside of grizzlies, you and every living thing. It is what makes everyone unique. Biologists can get DNA from hair. To get hair samples from grizzlies, biologists set up something called a "scent station". Biologists set out buckets of rotting fish and meat. The stinkier and better! The stinky buckets are surrounded by barbed wire. Bears climb through the barbed wire to check out the smell, and their hair is snagged on the wire. Biologists then have the hair they need to do their studies. With information, biologists can make decisions that will help grizzly bear numbers increase.

Between 1,200 and 1,400 wild grizzly bears live in the lower 48 states today. In Idaho, grizzlies are found in just three areas. The Selkirk Mountains have 40 to 50 grizzlies. The Cabinet-Yaak Mountains have 30 to 40 grizzlies. The Yellowstone Area has the most grizzlies. About 600 bears roam between Idaho, Montana and Wyoming. With help, grizzlies are slowly on the increase in Idaho's wild places.



Help! A Bear!

Many people are fascinated by bears. There are toy bears, bears in cartoons, and even a bear that reminds us not to play with matches. Sometimes people forget that bears are curious, wild, and powerful animals. They are not tame and don't act like cartoon bears. Most bears are shy and don't want to be around people. The best way to avoid a bear is not to get their attention. Here are some things to remember in bear country.

When hiking:

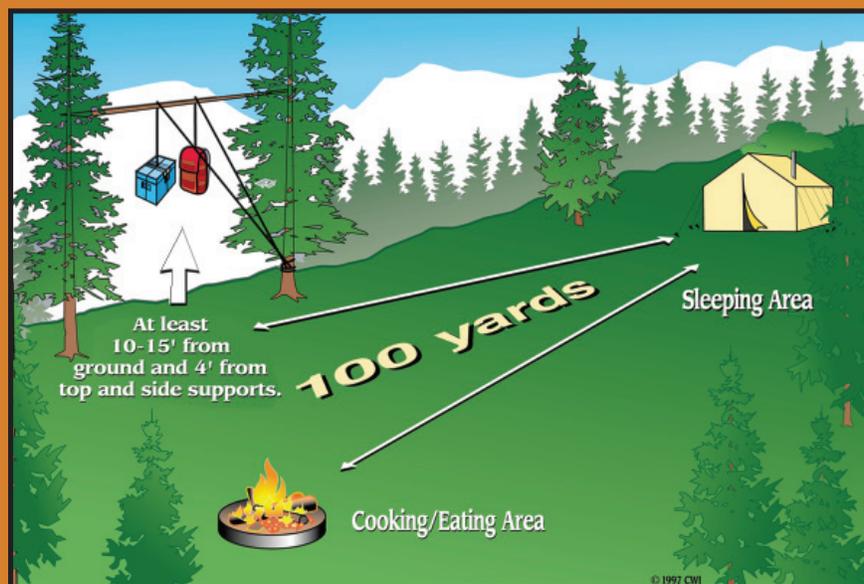
- ✓ Hike during the day when bears are less active.
- ✓ Never hike alone.
- ✓ Look for signs of bears. Tracks, droppings, claw marks, and turned over logs should tell you bears may be near.
- ✓ Let bears know you are there. Sing, talk loudly or clap.

When camping in wilderness areas:

- ✓ Choose a campsite away from berry patches and trails.
- ✓ Sleep in a brown or dull colored tent. Bright colors of red, blue and yellow attract bears.
- ✓ Don't cook, eat, or put anything smelly in your tent. Your tent should be at least a football field away from where you cook and eat.
- ✓ Hang food, the clothes you cook in, garbage, lotions, toothpaste and anything smelly, a football field away from your tent. Hang things 10 feet above the ground and four feet out from a tree.

If you do see a bear:

- ✓ Keep calm and **don't run**. Walk slowly backwards. A calm bear may just be curious. A bear moving around and drooling may be about to charge. • **Don't turn your back** to the bear. Look at the bear, but **don't look a bear straight in the eyes**. If you look a bear in the eyes, the bear may think that you want to fight.
- ✓ If a bear runs up to you, **stand your ground – don't move**. Bears often "bluff charge". That means they run up to you just to see what you will do.
- ✓ If a bear is within 30 feet, spray it with **bear pepper spray**.
- ✓ If a bear still comes too close, **play dead**. Curl into a ball or lie flat. Cover your neck with your hands and arms. Leave backpacks on for added padding and protection.



Home Sweet Home



An animal's home is called its habitat. A habitat contains four things: food, water, shelter and space. If one part is missing, an animal will not survive.

It is easy to see how important food, water and shelter are to an animal. You must eat. A big glass of ice water sure hits the spot on a hot summer day. You wouldn't want to stand outside during a thunderstorm. But the space part of habitat is just as important as food, water or shelter.

Animals need enough space to find the things they need without having to fight for them. When animals have to fight over food, they use important energy. Animals gathered together in small spaces can also make each other sick. Think of a student that has a cough. In the small space of a classroom, that student's germs quickly spread to other students who also get sick.

Next time you see an animal, think about its habitat. What is around that the animal might eat? Is there water nearby? Is there a bush, hole or cave for shelter? Does it seem like many other animals are around? Answering these questions will tell you a lot about the life and habitat of the animal you saw.



Never Stare at a Grizzly Bear

(Tune—Never Smile at a Crocodile)
By Pam Torres, Garfield Elementary School, Boise, Idaho

Nev-er stare at a griz-zly bear.
He might be sur-prised to see you stand-ing there.
Don't look at his face.
If you run, he'll chase.
Then he'll catch you and blow stinky bear breath in
your face.

Best be-ware of mommy griz-zly bear.
She might knock you down and rip out all your hair.
She can run. She can bite.
And it won't turn out alright.
She's a mommy taking care of baby griz-zly bear.

Best take care around a griz-zly bear.
If you're near some food, you better just be-ware.
They are smart, they like to eat.
They have claws on their feet.
If it's hungry, humpy, toothy, it's a griz-zly bear.



Grizzly Bear or Black Bear?

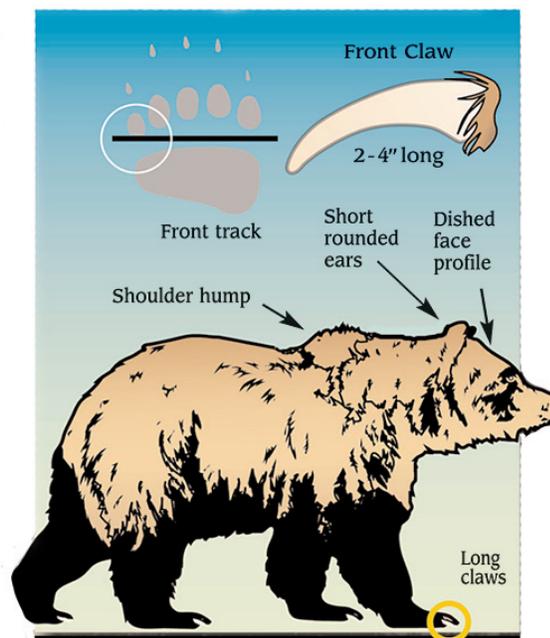
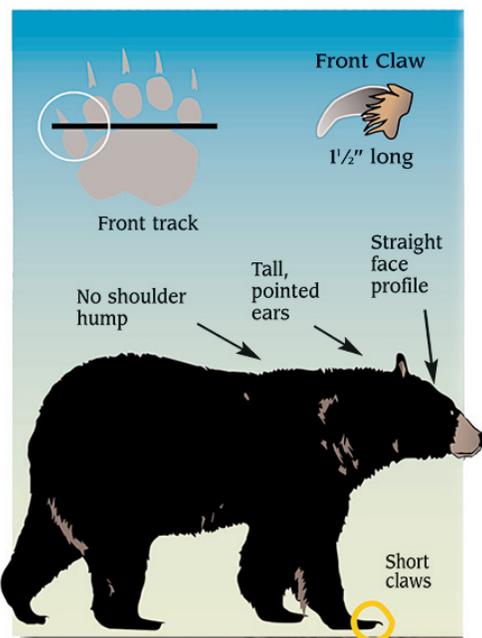
In Idaho we are lucky to have two different bears that live in our state- grizzly bears and black bears. Most of the bears people see are black bears. But if you are in northern or eastern Idaho, you might see a grizzly. Here are some ways to tell a grizzly bear from a black bear.

Grizzly Bear

- ▶ Color varies from blond to black. Usually has dark brown legs with light-tipped fur on head, face and across back.
- ▶ Large hump between shoulders.
- ▶ Shoulders higher than rump.
- ▶ Face is dished in between the eyes and the end of the nose.
- ▶ Ears are round and look small on the head.
- ▶ Front claws 2-4 inches long, light colored and slightly curved.
- ▶ Weigh between 200 to 600 pounds
- ▶ 3 ½ to 4 feet high at the shoulder and 6 to 7 feet when standing on hind feet.

Black Bear

- ▶ Color may be black, brown, blond, cinnamon or rust.
- ▶ No hump between shoulders.
- ▶ Rump higher than shoulders.
- ▶ Face has straight profile. Muzzle looks long.
- ▶ Ears look long and larger on head.
- ▶ Front claws are less than 2 inches long, dark colored, sharp and curved.
- ▶ Weigh between 100 to 300 pounds.
- ▶ 2 ½ to 3 feet high at the shoulder and 5 feet when standing on hind feet



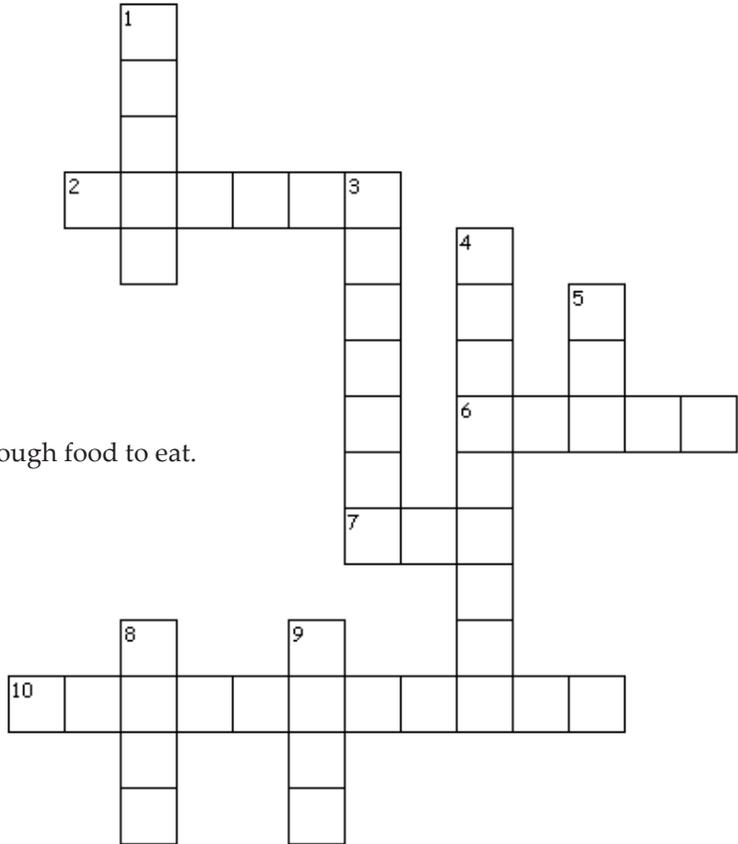
Grizzly Grabble

Across

2. Do bears eat more plants or animals in Idaho?
6. How many species of bears are found in the world?
7. Never do this to get away from a bear.
10. This is Idaho's largest bear.

Down

1. This is a bear's most important sense.
3. This is the smallest bear in the world.
4. Grizzlies do this in the winter, because they can't find enough food to eat.
5. Grizzly bears long claws help them to do this.
8. Grizzly cubs drink this the first year of their life.
9. Grizzly cubs do this to build strong muscles.



Words

Dig
Hibernate
Play
Sun Bear

Eight
Milk
Run

Grizzly Bear
Plants
Smell

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WE WOULD LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU !

If you have a letter, poem or question for *Wildlife Express*, it may be included in a future issue! Send it to the address printed above!

