

Wildlife Express!

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Black Bear

Black bears are the bears you are most likely to see in Idaho. There may be as many as 20,000 black bears living in Idaho! If you go into the forest looking for truly black bears, you might be surprised. You are just as likely to find brown, black, reddish or blond colored black bears. There are even white colored black bears found along the coast of British Columbia, Canada. Blue colored black bears are also found in British Columbia and in southeastern Alaska. As you can see, black bears are not always the color black.

Black bears are Idaho's forest bears. They have short, curved claws for climbing trees, and their darker colored fur helps them to hide in the shadows of the forest. Even the shape of black bears help them in a forest. The head is pointed and slender; the rump is round and large. This gives black bears a wedge-shaped body that helps them squeeze through thick brush.

Black bears spend the winter in a nice cozy den. Black bears usually do not dig a den from scratch. They usually find a tree that has fallen over in the forest. When the tree roots pull out of the ground, a hole is made. After a little molding and lining with grass, the hole makes a nice den for the winter. It also makes a nice place to give birth.

Cubs are born around the end of January or first part of February when their mothers are in their winter dens. Cubs are tiny when first born. They weigh only 8 ounces. That's one-half of a pound! They are only a bit bigger than a can of soda! Cubs are helpless when they are born. Their eyes are closed, and they have only a very thin layer

of fur on their bodies. Cubs will snuggle close to their mothers' bellies where they will be warm and find milk to drink. When the bears leave their winter dens in April or May, the cubs will weigh between four to 10 pounds.

Do you think Idaho bears eat a lot of fish and meat? Many people think bears eat mostly fish and meat, but in Idaho, that is not true. About 96% to 98% of a black bear's diet is made up of plants! The most important food for bears is berries; chokecherries, huckleberries and buffaloberries are favorites. Bears have special tools to help them pick berries – their lips! Bears have prehensile lips. Bears' lips can bend and grasp. Bears can wrap their lips around berries and pull them off one by one. Bears also eat leaves, grasses, water lilies and insects. In the spring when plants are harder to find, black bears search for dead animals to eat. Ground squirrels and other small animals may also be on the menu.

Keep an eye out for black bears when exploring Idaho's forests, but don't be too disappointed if you don't see one. Black bears are shy, secretive animals. If they know people are around, they usually hide, climb a tree or leave the area.



Grizzly Bear

Grizzly bears are Idaho's largest and most powerful bear. They are curious, intelligent and have a wonderful memory.

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 and digging dens.

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, dead animals or smaller mammals. 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. Of all the mammals studied for their sense of smell, the bears' sense of smell is the best. Can you smell dinner from a mile away? A bear can! 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 porcupine 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!

Grizzlies usually dig out dens on steep mountain slopes. They 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. Grizzly bear cubs weigh about 10 ounces when born - less than one pound. Cubs may be little when born, but they grow quickly. In April or May, cubs come out of the den with their mother weighing about 20 pounds.

Grizzly bears are a symbol of America's wild places. Keep an eye out for them if you are hiking in the Selkirk Mountains or exploring around Yellowstone National Park. Just look from a distance. Grizzly bears can be aggressive if they feel threatened.



How to Group Them

Taxonomy is the science of putting living things into groups, or classifying them. Plants and animals that are similar to each other are put into groups. All plants and animals in groups have similar genes (jeans). Part of our genes comes from our father and part of our genes comes from our mother. Together our genes give us our traits, like hair color, eye color or bone structure. Grouping animals helps scientists see how animals are related to each other.

There are millions of different plants and animals living on Earth. To group them, scientists start with large groups and break them down into smaller groups. They are first separated into groups called kingdoms. There is a plant kingdom and an animal kingdom. Each kingdom is broken down into smaller groups called *phyla* (FI-lah). Phyla are divided into classes. Classes are divided into orders. Orders are made into families. Each family is then divided into *genera* (JEN-air-ah). A single genera is called a *genus* (GE-nus). Each genus is divided into species. How does it work? Here is how the black bear would be classified.

KINGDOM - *Animalia* (an-ih-mail-yah) – Black bears are animals.

PHYLUM – *Craniata* (kra-knee-ot-a) – Black bears have a cranium to protect their brains. This used to be the Chordata phylum.

CLASS - *Mammalia* (ma-mail-ee-yah) – Black bears are mammals.

ORDER - *Carnivora* (kar-niv-or-ah) – Black bears have teeth that can kill and eat other animals.

FAMILY - *Ursidae* (ur-sih-dee) – This means the bear family.

GENUS – *Ursus* – Bear

SPECIES – *americanus* – The bear of North America

Together the genus and species is the black bear's scientific name, *Ursus americanus*.

Here is the classification for the grizzly bear. Black bears and grizzly bears are closely related. Do you see the similarities and differences?

KINGDOM – *Animalia* - Grizzly bears are animals.

PHYLUM – *Craniata* - Grizzly bears have a cranium to protect their brains.

CLASS – *Mammalia* - Grizzly bears are mammals.

ORDER – *Carnivora* - Grizzly bears have teeth that can kill and eat other animals.

FAMILY – *Ursidae* - This means the bear family.

GENUS – *Ursus* – Bear

SPECIES – *arctos* – The bear found around the arctic region of the North Hemisphere.

The grizzly bear's scientific name is *Ursus arctos*.



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.

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 wng on hind feet

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 to 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



Grizzly Bear



Color and size can be misleading
Look for a combination of characteristics



A Long Winter's Nap...

Have you ever been snowshoeing or cross-country skiing? It's a peaceful way to spend a winter afternoon. A certain kind of hush falls 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 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. Bears eat more plants than anything else. Cold weather and snow makes it pretty hard to find juicy fruits and plants. 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?

It's Springtime in Idaho!

March in Idaho can mean many things. One day it is warm and sunny. The next, it's snowing! Winter cannot let go, but spring seems slow to arrive. Officially, spring begins on March 20 with the vernal equinox. This is a day when the amount of light and dark is just about equal. After that date, we start getting more and more daylight.

You can find many signs of spring by getting outside and looking around. Check out the trees and shrubs in your yard. Do you see buds on the tips of branches? Pull dead leaves away from the soil.

Can you find green shoots coming up out of the ground? These are the first spring flowers. You can even listen to the sap rising in the trees on warm afternoons. Thin-barked trees like aspen or a young cottonwood work best for this. Press your ear tightly against the bark and listen very carefully. Do you hear gurgling? That is the sound of sap rising from the roots into the tree's trunk and branches. If you have a stethoscope, you will be able to hear the sap

even better. In the winter, sap is stored in tree roots. But as spring arrives, trees come out of their winter dormancy, and the sap rises to help nourish the tree.

Bird song is another sure sign of spring. As the days get longer, male birds sing to establish a territory. In some places, like a marsh, the sound of singing birds can be very loud!

Here are some songs to listen for in your neighborhood:



RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE

AMERICAN ROBIN

KILLDEER

NORTHERN FLICKER

SONG SPARROW

"KONG-A-REE, KONG-A-REE"

"CHEESEBURGER, CHEESEBURGER"

"CHEERILY, CHEER, CHEER-UP, CHEER-UP"

"KILLDEER, KILLDEER, KILLDEER"

FLICKA, FLICKA, FLICKA, FLICKA"

"MAIDS, MAIDS, PUT ON YOUR TEA KETTLE-LETTLE-LETTLE"

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:

- 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.

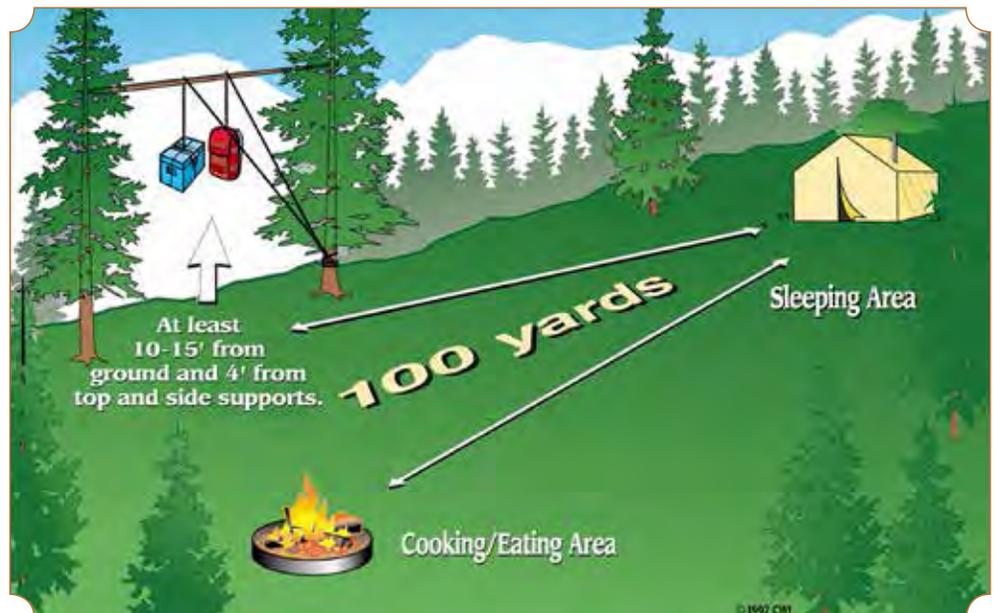
WHEN CAMPING IN WILDERNESS AREAS:

- Choose a camp site 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.



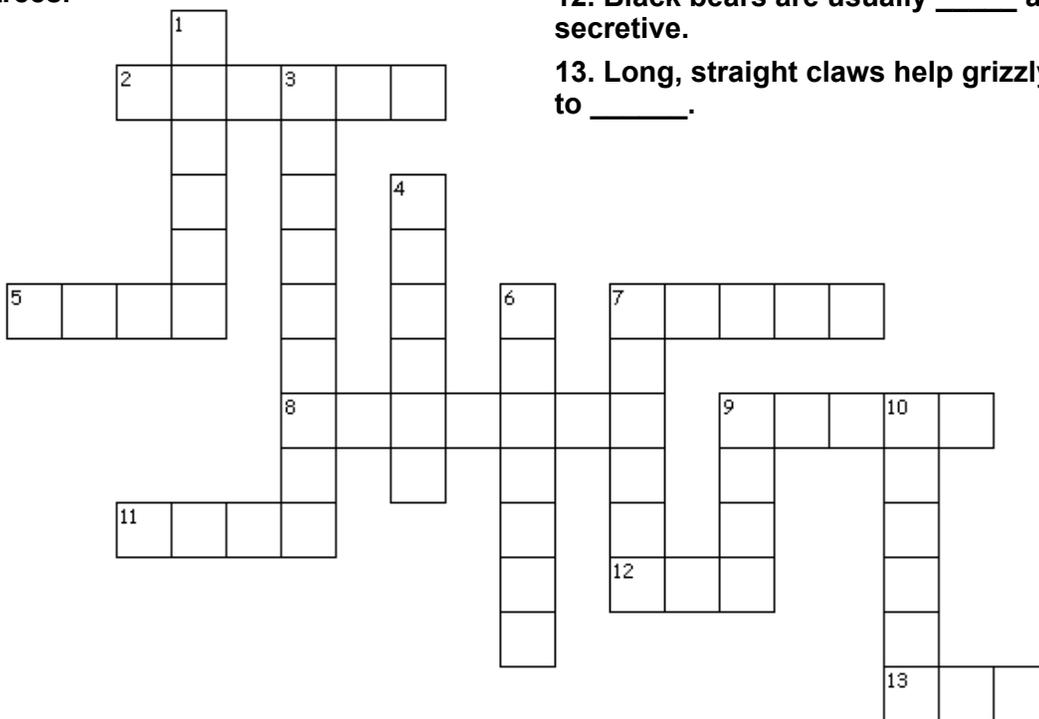
Idaho Bears Word Search

Down

- Black bears come in different _____.
- Bears _____ because they can't find enough food in the winter.
- Bears are born in the _____.
- Idaho's largest bear.
- Idaho bears mostly eat _____.
- Black bears have a straight face and wedge-shaped _____ to move through a forest.
- Small, _____ claws help black bears climb trees.

Across

- Grizzly cubs stay with their _____ for 2 - 3 years.
- Prehensile _____ help bears grab berries and other foods.
- Black bear cubs weigh one-half a _____ when born.
- Black bears are only found in North _____.
- Most common bear in Idaho.
- Grizzly bears may _____ to be 25 years old.
- Black bears are usually _____ and secretive.
- Long, straight claws help grizzly bears to _____.



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