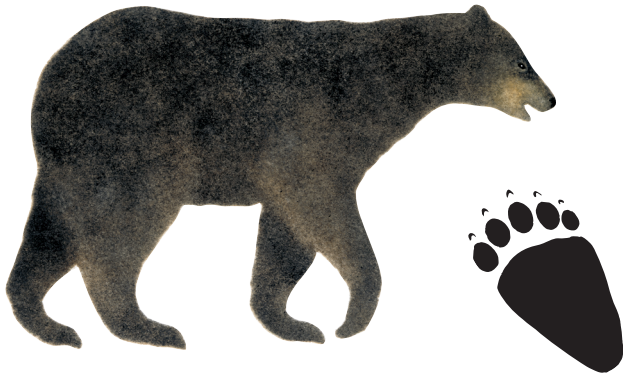




BLACK BEAR

Ursus americanus



Appearance

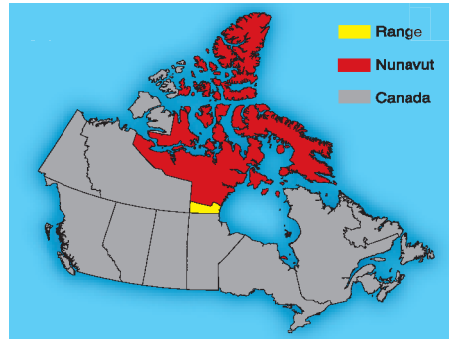
Black bears are not always black. They range in colour from blonde to brown to black. The most common colour in Nunavut is black, with a tan muzzle and a cream V shape on the chest. Black bears have large heads and short necks. Their eyes are small and black, their ears are rounded and their snouts are long. Black bears vary in size a great deal during the year and are heaviest in the autumn and leanest in the spring. Generally, females weigh between 90 and 110kg and males between 115 and 170kg. Both are usually between 1.5 and 1.8m long and almost 1m high at the shoulder.

Food And Feeding

Black bears eat a wide variety of food and this makes it possible for them to adapt to many environments. They feed on berries, fruits, nuts, twigs, leaves, roots, insects, larvae, eggs, carrion, honey and small mammals. Unfortunately, in some places bears have gotten used to eating garbage produced by humans and looking for food in the wild then becomes secondary.

Behaviour

Black bears are generally solitary, although a gathering of several bears may occur in places that have an abundance of food. They have poor eyesight but their sense of smell and hearing are excellent. They can run quickly and swim short distances. Black bears hibernate during the winter and in Nunavut they will begin seeking out denning sites in September. During hibernation, the bear's body temperature drops about 5 degrees and their metabolism is slightly lower than usual. They do not eat or expel fluids or wastes during this time. When they emerge from their dens in the spring, they are lean and looking for food.



Range

The range of the black bear in Nunavut is limited to the southern part of the Kivalliq region following the tree line.

Habitat

The black bear's main habitat is forested areas but it can also be found in swamps, marshes, and thickets and on the tundra.

Reproduction

The breeding season for the black bear can begin as early as May and last until August. Mating is competitive and males may fight aggressively for the right to mate with a female. After a gestation period of 7 to 7.5 months including a period of delayed implantation, 1 to 4 cubs are born. The cubs weigh between 240 and 330g at birth and are blind, hairless and helpless. At 6 months, the cubs may weigh up to 25kg and although they are independent, they usually spend the winter with their mother and go off on their own or with a sibling the following spring. Females generally mate every two years.

Status Survival and Management

According to the Nunavut Wild Species 2000 report, the current status of the black bear in Nunavut is unassessed. Although black bears can live for 25 to 30 years in the wild they usually survive for less than 10 years. Black bears' main predators in Nunavut include humans and other carnivores.

Did You Know?

Black bears may look like they move awkwardly but they are capable of great bursts of speed when they need it. For short distances, they have been clocked at speeds of 55 km/h!!

