

公众号：Wecancan



# Bears

## National Geographic Readers: Bears

By: Elizabeth Carney

Get ready for a walk on the wild side! Learn about different kinds of bears, where they live, and what they do.

<b>7-9</b>	<b>15-30 mins</b>	<b>740L</b>	<b>4.2</b>
Age Range	Length	Lexile <sup>®</sup> Measure	AR Level



Elizabeth Carney



Washington, D.C.

## Dear Parents,

Children are naturally curious about the world around them, and curiosity is a powerful motivation for reading. Studies show that informational reading is critical to success in school. National Geographic Kids Readers allow you to feed your children's interests and create readers who not only can read, but also want to read!

To sustain children's excitement about reading, we have created a special program called **NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC KIDS SUPER READERS**. As kids read each National Geographic Kids Reader, they cross off its picture on a free National Geographic Kids Super Readers poster that parents can download from [kids.nationalgeographic.com/superreaders](http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/superreaders).

Throughout the process, kids and parents go to the website and download specially designated prizes that reward their effort. Kids can have even more reading fun online, with lively book-related activities, quizzes and games, fascinating excerpts, and sneak previews of upcoming books.

The National Geographic Kids Super Readers program appeals to kids' love of accomplishment while providing them with incentives to keep reading. When the reading experience is fun, children learn more and achieve more. What could be better than that?

Sincerely,

*Mariam Jean Dreher*

Mariam Jean Dreher  
Professor of Reading Education  
University of Maryland, College Park

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# Meet the Bears

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**Q** Why do bears have fur coats?  
**A** Because they would look silly in jackets!



brown bear in Glacier Bay National Park, Alaska, U.S.A.

Do you think you know all about bears? You might have a teddy bear or two. You might see bears on TV, in movies, or at a zoo.

But there are some things about bears that might surprise you.

Eight species of bear roam the world today. They are found on four continents. But each species looks and acts a little different from the others.

Let's meet the bears!

**Den Notes**



**SPECIES:** A group of closely related plants, animals, or other living things

What kind of bear do you picture when you think about bears? Maybe you think about polar bears. These snowy white bears live in the freezing Arctic. They are the biggest bears in the world.

polar bear in Svalbard, Norway



You might think of giant pandas, the black-and-white bears that live in China. They munch on bamboo all day.



giant panda

Maybe you think about black bears or brown bears. These two species are common in many places in North America. Some people can look out their window and see a black bear in their yard! Brown bears can be found in the forests of Asia, Europe, and North America. They're the most wide-ranging bears in the world.



Bears are faster than they look. A black bear can sprint 35 miles an hour for short distances.



You might not be as familiar with other kinds of bears.

Asiatic (ay-zhee-AT-ik) black bears are also called moon bears. They have a marking on their chest that looks like a crescent (KRES-unt) moon.



Asiatic black bear

Sloth bears have shaggy black hair. They look like they just rolled out of bed! They mainly live in India.



sloth bear

Sun bears are the smallest bears. They grow no heavier than a Great Dane dog. These bears are found in the tropical forests of Southeast Asia.



sun bear

Andean (AN-dee-uhn) bears have rings of white or golden fur around their eyes. That's why they're sometimes called spectacled bears. ("Spectacles" is another word for glasses.) They're the only bears native to South America.



Andean bears have only 13 pairs of ribs—one pair less than other bears.



Andean bear

# Bears of the World

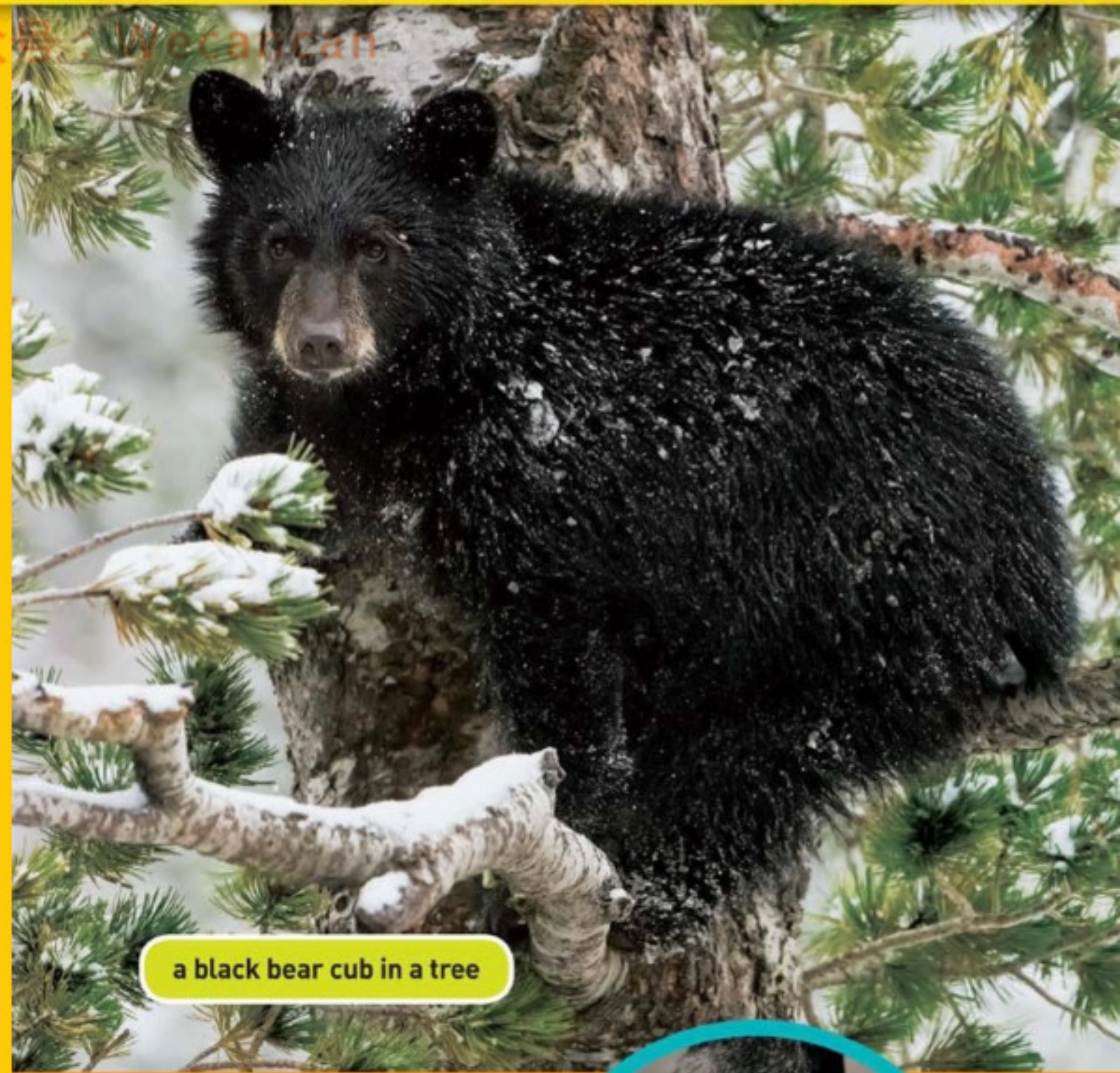
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The world's eight bear species live in certain places around the globe. Check out the ranges of the world's bears.

## Den Notes



**RANGE:** The region (REE-juhn) where the animals of a particular species live



a black bear cub in a tree



a sun bear's claws



A bear's claws can grow as long as a white-board eraser.

# Big Appetites



These grizzly bears in Alaska are catching fish.

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Q

What do teddy bears get when it rains?

They get wet!

A

Have you ever heard someone say “I’m as hungry as a bear”? That person must have been pretty hungry, because bears can eat a lot. Many types of bears eat anything they can find. Brown bears, black bears, and moon bears are omnivores. They eat grass, insects, fish, berries, garbage—you name it.

Polar bears live in an icy environment where few plants grow. So they mainly eat meat, such as seals and walrus. But like brown and black bears, a hungry polar bear will eat anything it can find.

## Den Notes



**OMNIVORE:** An animal that eats both plants and animals



A polar bear drags a seal onto the ice.

Some bears are pickier eaters. Sloth bears and sun bears eat mostly insects, especially termites and ants.

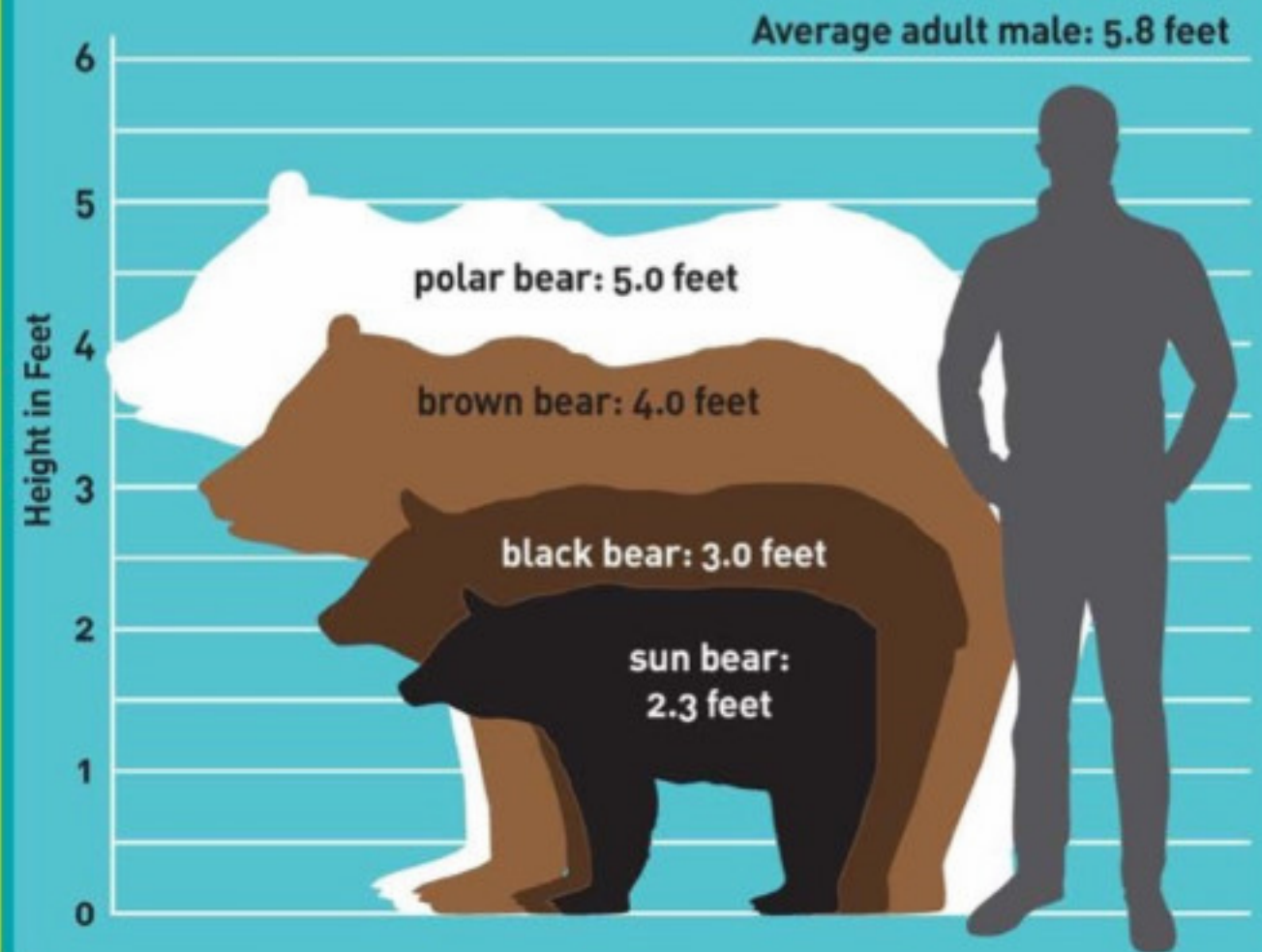
All bears are considered carnivores. But pandas and Andean bears prefer to eat mostly plants! Pandas dine on just one type of plant—bamboo. Andean bears chow down on fruits and palms, and will even munch on corn in a farmer's field.



An Andean bear in Ecuador eats a grassy plant.

### How Big Are Bears?

Bears need a lot of food to fuel their big bodies. Some are much heavier than humans. Polar bears weigh up to 1,800 pounds! Sun bears are tiny in comparison. They weigh up to 150 pounds. The sizes of all other bears fall in between. Let's see how bears compare.



### Den Notes



**CARNIVORE:** An animal that eats mostly meat. Some can eat plants when they need to.



# Baby Bears

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A giant panda holds her two-week-old cub.

**Weird  
but  
true!**

Newborn panda cubs are the same size and weight as a stick of butter!

When bear cubs are born, mother bears have a big job. Newborn bears are helpless and tiny. They are blind and have almost no hair. Mother bears give the cubs everything they need. They keep the cubs warm and make sure they're safe and well fed.

Bears are mammals. So cubs drink milk from their mothers. The cubs grow and put on weight fast.

## Den Notes

**MAMMAL:** An animal that produces milk to feed its young. Mammals usually have hair or fur covering their skin.



a polar bear mother and her three cubs



A scientist once described polar bear milk as tasting like chalky, fishy cream. Yuck!

This is the first time out of the den for these polar bear cubs.



brown bear cubs playing

All bear cubs love to goof around. They tumble, chew, and even swat at a brother or sister. This helps them practice skills they'll need to survive.

Bear cubs stay with their mother for one to three years. She teaches them everything she knows about how to live in the wild. Then the cubs are ready to live on their own.

In colder areas, mothers give birth to cubs in a den. Cubs are often born in January or February. The cubs leave the den in March or April when they are big enough to travel. Cubs can't wait to get outside!

### Den Notes

**DEN:** A shelter for a wild animal. Bear dens can be a hole in a hillside, a cave, or a burrow in a snowpack.



a grizzly bear mother with her cubs

# 6 COOL FACTS About Bears

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1 A polar bear's hair isn't really white. It just appears that way because each hair is clear and hollow.



4 White spirit bears look like polar bears, but they're actually a rare kind of black bear.



2 The biggest bear to ever live was the giant short-faced bear. Almost as tall as an elephant, this prehistoric bear died out between 500,000 and 2 million years ago.



5 A bear's sense of smell is seven times more powerful than a bloodhound's.

3 Sloth bears have no front teeth. They use their mouth like a vacuum to suck up insects.



6 Many bear species often give birth to twins.




# Super Sleepers

公众号: Wee



grizzly bear

**Den Notes**



**HIBERNATE:** To spend winter in a sleeplike state. This saves energy while there is little food available.

When winter is coming, the temperature drops and food gets harder to find. What's a bear to do? Settle down for a long winter's nap, of course! Black bears and brown bears find a den and go into a sleeplike state for the winter. This is called hibernating.

Not all bears hibernate. Bears that hibernate do it because there isn't enough food to survive the winter. For up to seven months, they don't eat, drink, or even take a bathroom break!

To prepare for their long sleep, bears eat as much as they can in the fall. The extra fat gives their bodies energy to survive until spring.

# A Bear's Body

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Bears have body parts with special abilities that allow them to stay healthy while they hibernate. Here are some cool features of a bear's body.

**BONES:** If a person were to lie still for months, his or her bones would break down. But this doesn't happen to bears. When bears hibernate, a chemical in their bodies prevents bone breakdown. When bears wake up, their skeletons are still strong.

**MUSCLES:** A hibernating bear doesn't move much for months. In people, this would lead to muscle loss and severe weakness. But a bear's muscles stay strong.

**HEART:** During hibernation, a bear's heart rate slows down. It goes from 60 beats per minute to 6 beats per minute. This saves energy. In the spring, the heart rate returns to normal.

black bear

There's much we don't understand about hibernating bears. How do their muscles stay strong after not moving for months? How do bears stay healthy after gaining so much weight and then nearly starving? Scientists are studying bears to try to answer these questions. Their findings might also be useful in treating human diseases.

A black bear mother and her cub hibernate in a den.



To fatten up before hibernating, bears may eat 20,000 calories—or more—a day. That's like eating more than 65 cheeseburgers!

### Scientist Spotlight

Dave Garshelis (gar-SHELL-iss) risks life and limb by doing something many people consider crazy: entering a sleeping bear's den. Normally no one should ever disturb bears and their cubs. But Garshelis knows how to study them safely. He has special training and years of experience. He gives the mother bear a drug to make her sleep soundly. Then he and his team weigh the bears and take blood samples. The information helps the scientists learn more about bears and hibernation.



Garshelis (right) and his team run tests on a bear they drugged while it was hibernating. The bear lived longer than any known wild bear.

# Don't Be Fooled!

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These animals might sometimes be called bears, but they're not bears at all.



**BEARCAT (BINTURONG):** This critter has a face like a cat, a body like a bear, and a tail like a monkey! But binturongs (bin-TOO-rongs) are related to none of those animals. They're related to small mammals called civets (SIV-ets).



**WATER BEAR (TARDIGRADE):** Unlike bears, these critters are so small you almost need a microscope to see them. Tardigrades (TAR-dee-grades) are tiny creatures that live in moss and other wet places.




**KOALA:** If you ever hear people refer to koalas as "koala bears," feel free to politely correct them. A koala is a marsupial (mar-SOO-pee-ul), a type of animal with a pouch. They live in Australia, where there are no native bears.



**RED PANDA:** Red pandas and giant pandas share similar names and live in the same region. But giant pandas are bears, while red pandas are not. The two species share a common relative that lived millions of years ago. But they're not very alike today.

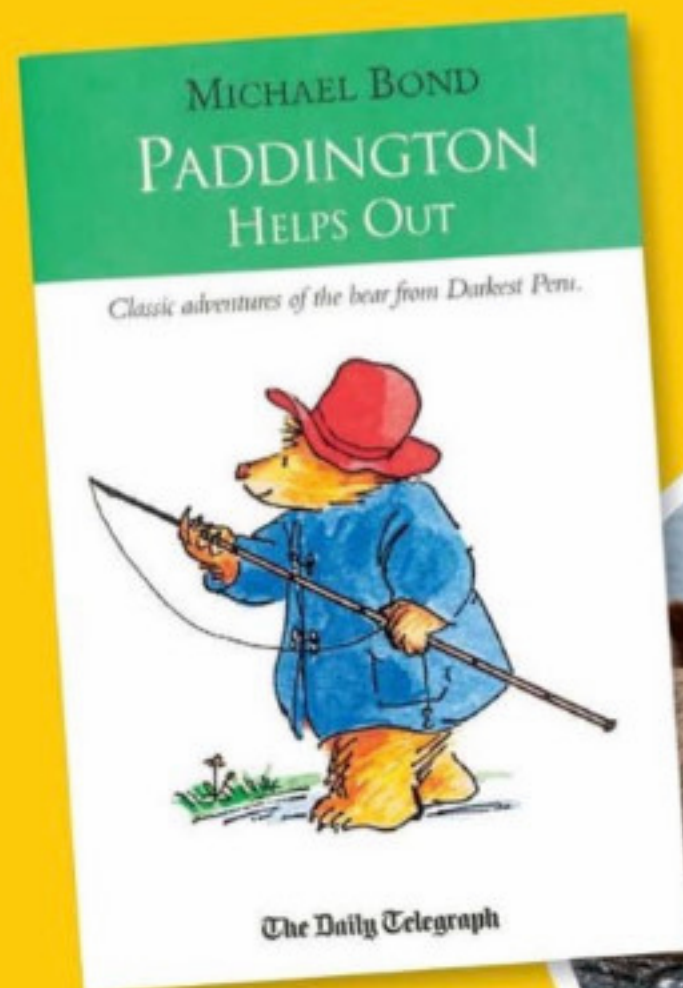
**Den Notes**

 **MICROSCOPE:** A tool for making very small objects and living things look bigger

# Bears in Books

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Bears have been popular characters in children's books for a long time. See how some beloved make-believe bears stack up against real-life bears.



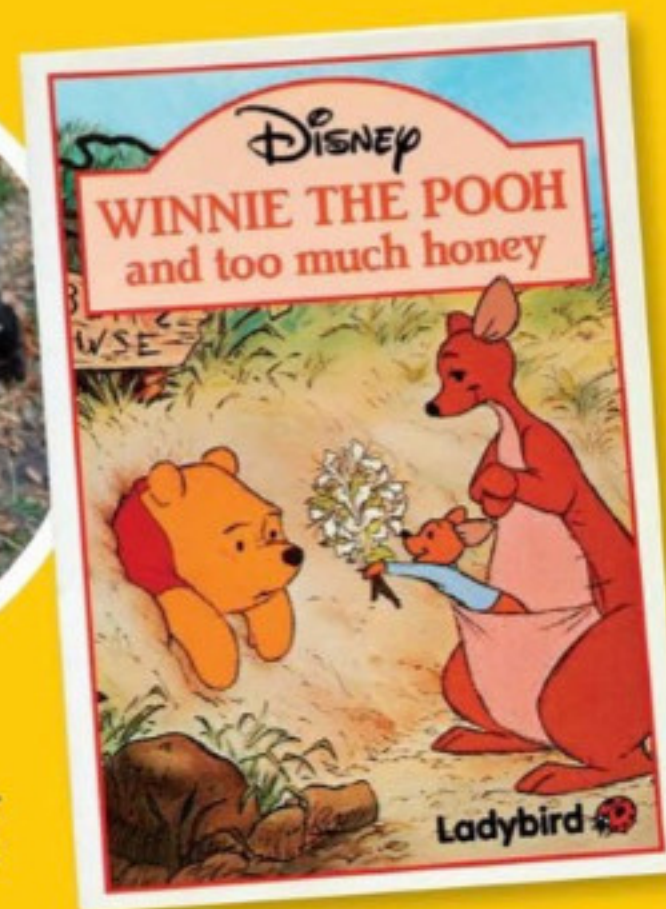
**PADDINGTON:** Enjoys fishing with his family, just like grizzly bear cubs in Alaska.



**BALOO:** Eats termites and ants, his favorite treats, just like a real sloth bear.

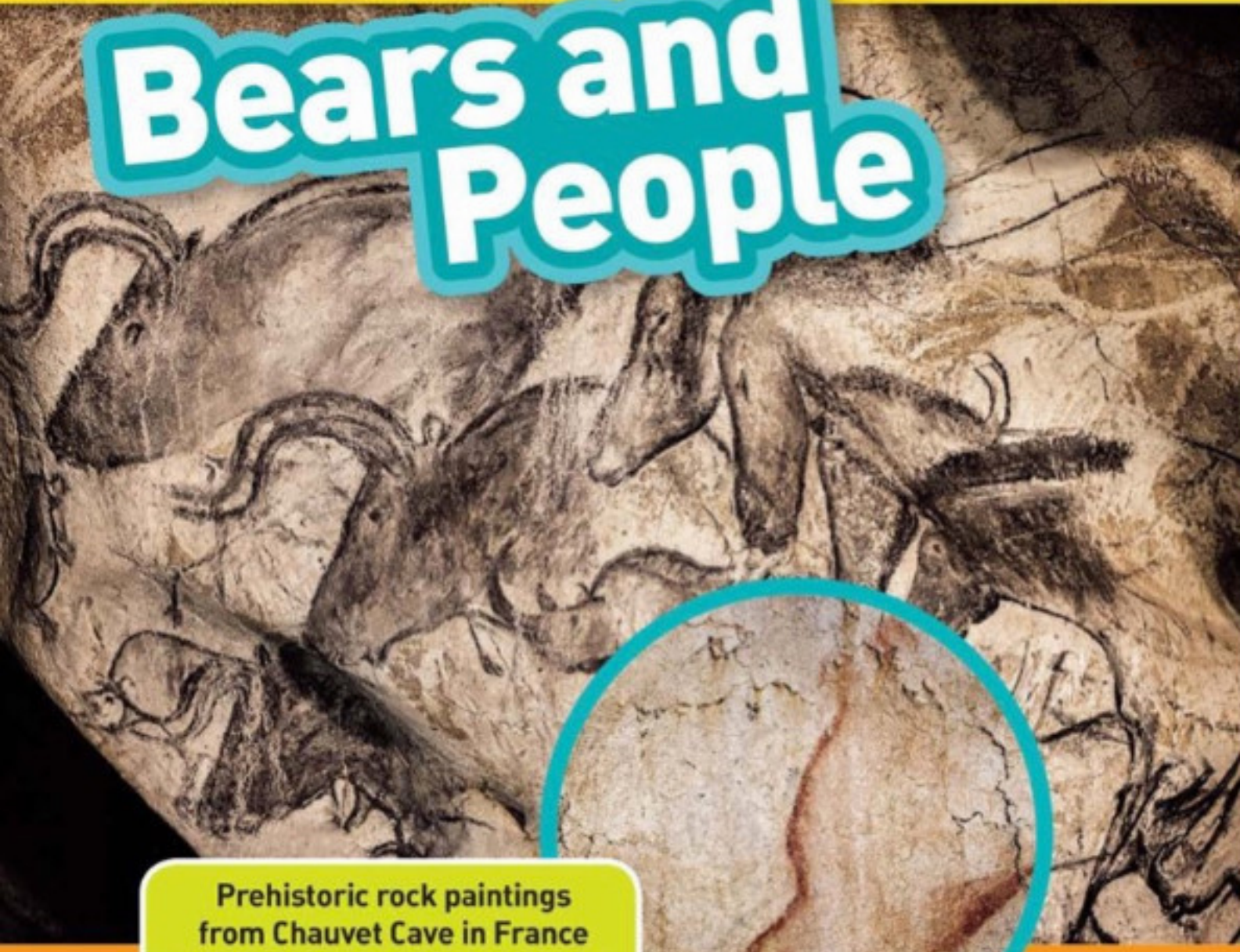


**WINNIE THE POOH:** Pooh Bear will do anything for honey, just like some real bears.





# Bears and People



Prehistoric rock paintings from Chauvet Cave in France show bears and other animals.

People have had a special relationship with bears for thousands of years. Bears appear in famous cave paintings done by prehistoric people in France 30,000 years ago. Many other cultures also have lived alongside bears for a very long time.

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A First Nations tribe in Canada has been teaming up with scientists to study bears. The tribe set up snares to snag bears' hair as they walked by. Scientists checked the DNA in the hair. They learned that a lot of bears go through the region to reach fish on the coast. Even the tribe didn't know so many bears traveled through the area.

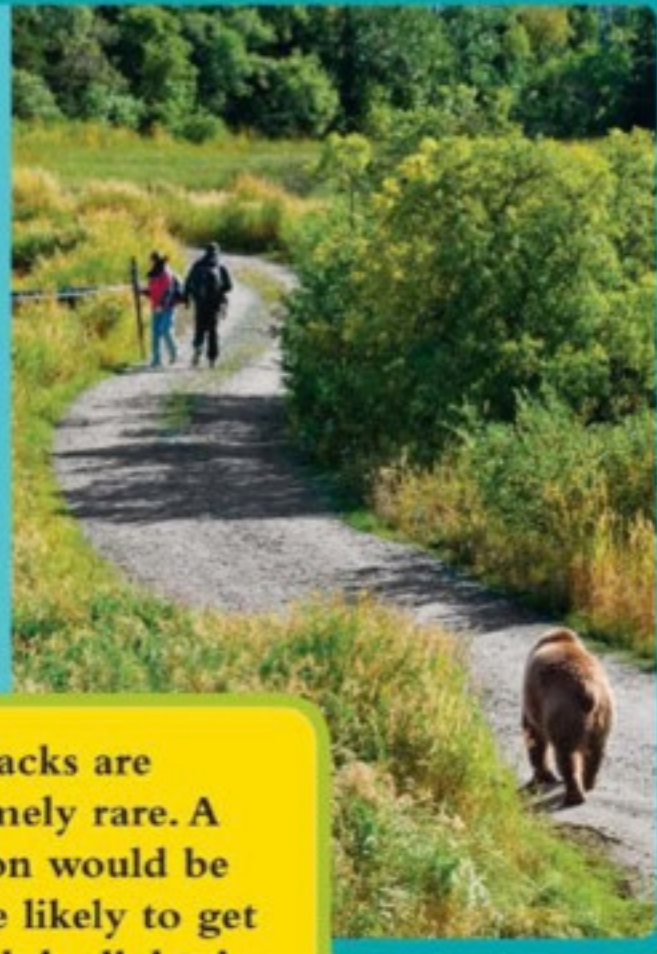


A researcher collects bear fur.

It's easy to be in a place where bears live and have no idea that bears are there. That's because bears are good at avoiding people. With their powerful sense of smell, they know you're around long before you can see them.

### Too Close for Comfort

If you're ever face-to-face with a bear, don't panic and don't try to run. Bears can run much faster than you. Instead, lower your eyes and back away in the direction you came from. A bear is likely to lose interest and walk away.

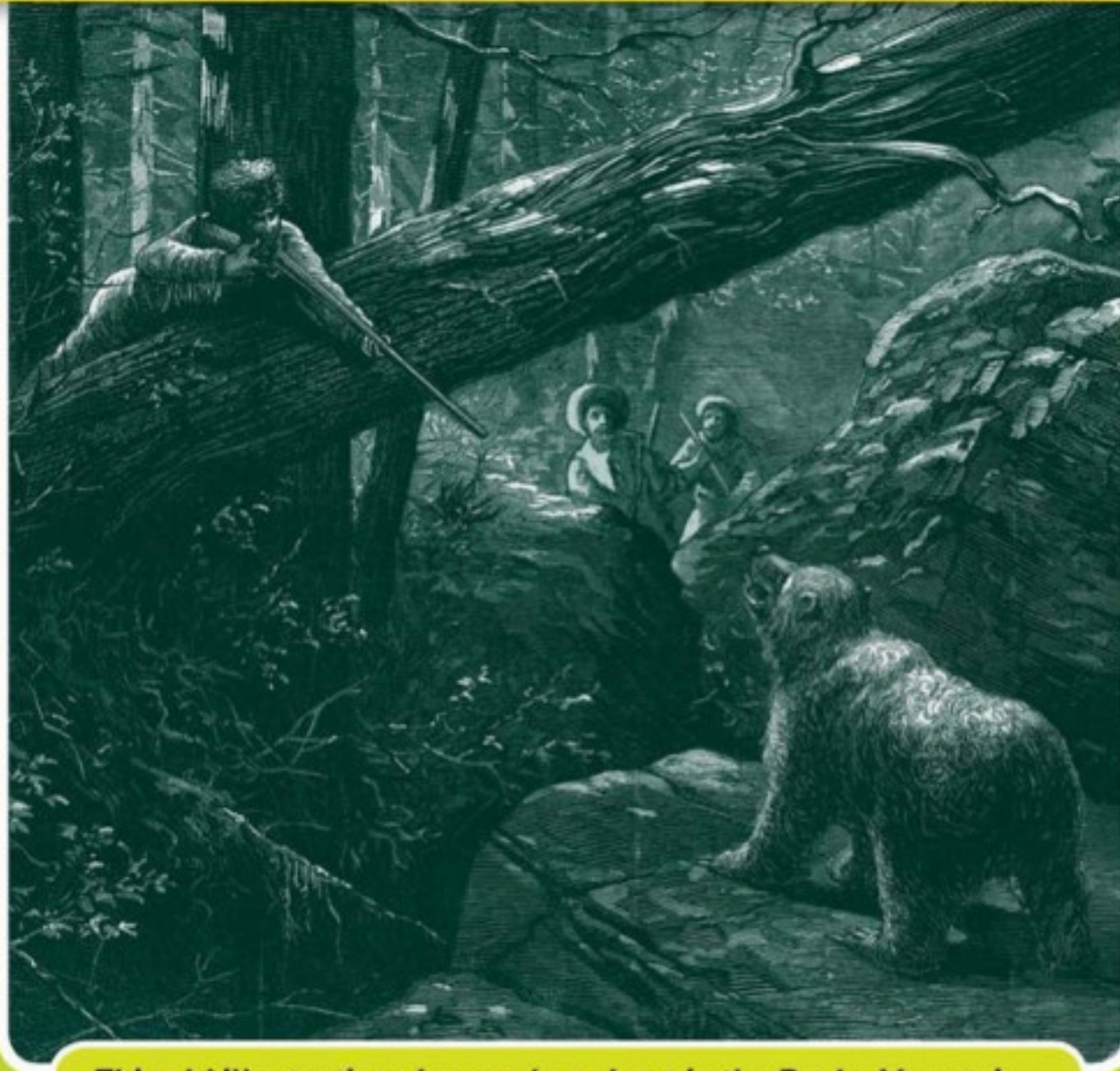


Bear attacks are extremely rare. A person would be more likely to get struck by lightning (and that's not very likely either!).

In Yosemite National Park in California, U.S.A., campers must put all food in special boxes.



Still, it's important to practice good bear manners when you're in bear country. The most important rule: Never leave food lying around. Hang food between trees at campsites. Use bear-proof garbage cans. If you spot a bear, keep your distance. Bears are aggressive only when they see you as a threat.



This old illustration shows a bear hunt in the Rocky Mountains.

Years ago, hunters often killed bears for their fur and meat. In some areas, bears were hunted until they nearly died out. Brown bears once lived all over western North America and into northern Mexico. But by the late 1880s, overhunting had wiped out most of them.

In Russia and parts of Asia, moon bear numbers may have dropped by half in the last 30 years. Overhunting is a major factor.

But there's hope for bears. In many parts of the world, laws protect endangered bears. Some places have rules that limit bear hunting. And experts have been working to protect bear habitats.



### Den Notes



**ENDANGERED:** At risk of dying out

**HABITAT:** The place where an animal lives



# The Future for Bears

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Like many animal species, bears face threats to their future. Some bears—such as sloth and sun bears—struggle from poaching and habitat loss. As people clear forests to get wood or to make farmland, bears have fewer places to live.

## Den Notes



**POACHING:**  
Illegal hunting

This forest in Canada is being cut down and cleared.



Melting sea ice means it's harder for polar bears to hunt.

Polar bears have a different problem. Because the climate is changing and the world is getting warmer, they have less sea ice to hunt on. Scientists agree that humans are playing a large role in the warming trend. Scientists are studying polar bears to see how they are handling their changing home.



A researcher dresses as a giant panda before he works with a cub.

For pandas, the problem is that only 1,600 remain in the wild. Pandas have the fewest numbers. At the Wolong Panda Reserve in China, a keeper slips into a panda suit. He disguises his scent. He's making sure the young panda cubs don't get used to humans as he teaches them how to survive in the wild.

This keeper and others want to boost panda numbers. But they are not the only ones working to help bears.

## Panda Triplets

In 2014, the world celebrated a very special birth. Panda triplets were born at a safari park in China. It's rare for a panda to have triplets. Even more special—all three survived.

It's a Chinese tradition to name babies when they are 100 days old. So when the cubs turned 100 days old, they were given names in a special ceremony. Meet MengMeng (cute), KuKu (cool), and ShuaiShuai (handsome).



In Churchill, Canada, bears sometimes wander too close to town. In the past, such bears would have been killed. But now, workers return these bears to safety in the wild.

A polar bear looks into a research vehicle in Churchill, Canada.





Planting trees can help fight climate change.

## 活动号 : Wecancan

Go green! Fighting climate change helps all bears. Save energy by turning off electronics when you don't need them. Walk or ride your bike. Plant a tree.

Tell the bears' story. Create bear-related art or stage a play. You can sell tickets to your show. Later, donate the money to animal-welfare groups that work to protect bears.

It's up to us to make the world a place where bears and people can live together. There's so much you can do to help bears around the world. Here are a few ideas.

Learn all you can about bears. Books, magazines, and films are great sources. Visit your local library to find out more.



Biking saves energy—and is a healthy way to travel!

# QUIZ WHIZ

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How much do you know about bears? After reading this book, probably a lot! Take this quiz and find out.

Answers are at the bottom of page 45.



1

Which of these continents does not have native bears?

- A. Australia
- B. North America
- C. Asia
- D. South America



2

Which kind of bear loves to eat ants?

- A. a sloth bear
- B. a panda bear
- C. a polar bear
- D. an Andean bear

What does an omnivore eat?

- A. only plants
- B. only animals
- C. both plants and animals
- D. mostly plants with a few animals

3



4



How do bears get ready to hibernate?

- A. They get a lot of exercise.
- B. They go on a diet.
- C. They hide their food.
- D. They eat a lot of food.

5



Which of these animals is really a bear?

- A. a koala
- B. a spirit bear
- C. a water bear
- D. a red panda

6



Where would you likely find a newborn bear cub in the winter?

- A. in a den
- B. in a tree
- C. in a nursery
- D. in its mother's pouch

7



Which species of bear has the fewest numbers in the wild?

- A. sun bears
- B. panda bears
- C. brown bears
- D. polar bears

Answers: 1. A; 2. A; 3. C; 4. D; 5. B; 6. A; 7. B

# Glossary

公众号：



**CARNIVORE:** An animal that eats mostly meat. Some can eat plants when they need to.



**DEN:** A shelter for a wild animal. Bear dens can be a hole in a hillside, a cave, or a burrow in a snowpack.



**ENDANGERED:** At risk of dying out



**HABITAT:** The place where an animal lives



**HIBERNATE:** To spend winter in a sleeplike state. This saves energy while there is little food available.



**MAMMAL:** An animal that produces milk to feed its young. Mammals usually have hair or fur covering their skin.



**MICROSCOPE:** A tool for making very small objects and living things look bigger



**OMNIVORE:** An animal that eats both plants and animals



**POACHING:** Illegal hunting



**RANGE:** The region where the animals of a particular species live



**SPECIES:** A group of closely related plants, animals, or other living things