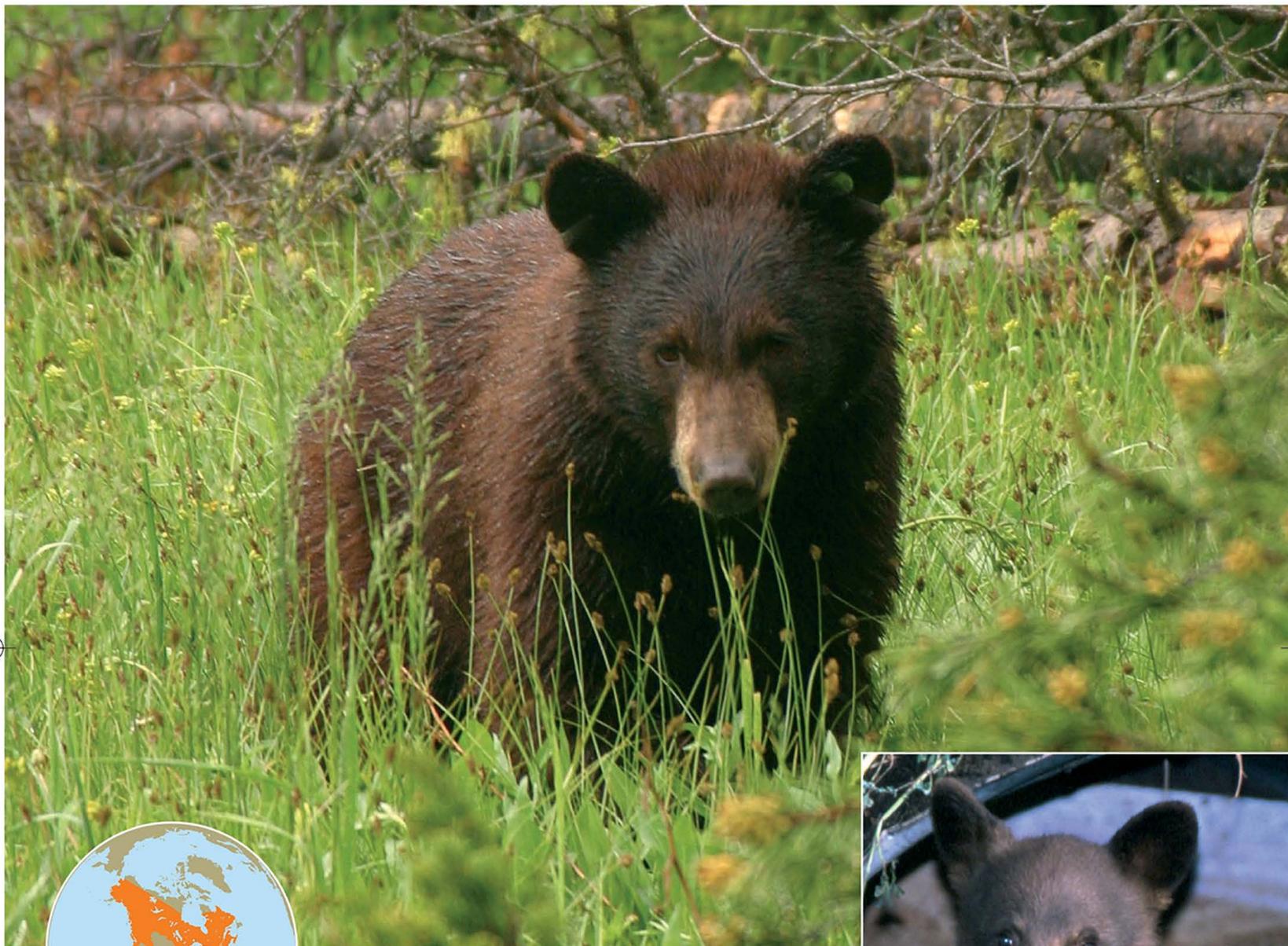


# AMERICAN BLACK BEAR



## AMERICAN BLACK BEAR (*Ursus americanus*)

American black bears are widely distributed throughout the forested areas of Canada and the United States and are also found in parts of Mexico. They are the most numerous of all bear species with around 600,000 individuals in the wild. American black bears are omnivorous, and feed on a wide range of foods. Over 40,000 bears are killed each year for trophies and for pest control. Many are poached for their gall bladders.



# Bears of the World

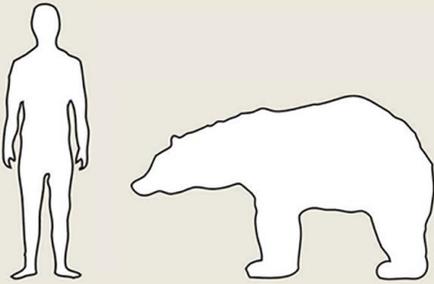
## AMERICAN BLACK BEAR

**Lifespan:** 20 to 25 years in the wild

**Size:** Adult males 1.3 to 1.9 metres in length

**Weight:** 60 to 300 kg

*Size varies considerably depending on the quality of the food available. Males are often 20 to 60 percent larger than females.*



**Comparative size of American black bear and 1.80 metre man**



### APPEARANCE

This medium-sized Black bear has a brown muzzle. Its coat can also be blue-grey, cream (known as Kermode bears), and even brown (which often results in people confusing them with Brown bears). They lack the shoulder hump seen in the Brown bears, and have strong, highly curved claws which are used for digging and climbing.

### HABITAT

Black bears are normally found in both arid and moist forested areas from sea level to over 2,000 metres altitude in North America. They are good tree climbers and strong swimmers. They often live in the same habitat as Brown bears and hibernate in the harsh winters of the northern areas of their distribution.

### DISTRIBUTION

Black bears are widely distributed throughout the forested areas of North America, although they have been totally driven out from some of their original range. They are found in northern Mexico, 32 states of the United States, and all the provinces and territories of Canada (except Prince Edward Island).

### REPRODUCTION

Females reach sexual maturity at three to four years of age and males a year or so later. Mating takes place in June to August, and pairs may remain together for only a few days. Pregnancy lasts about 220 days and the cubs are born in a den from January to February. At birth, cubs weigh 225 to 330 grams. Litter size ranges from one to five, but two is the average. Cubs may be weaned at six to eight months, but they remain with their mothers for a year and a half.

### DIET

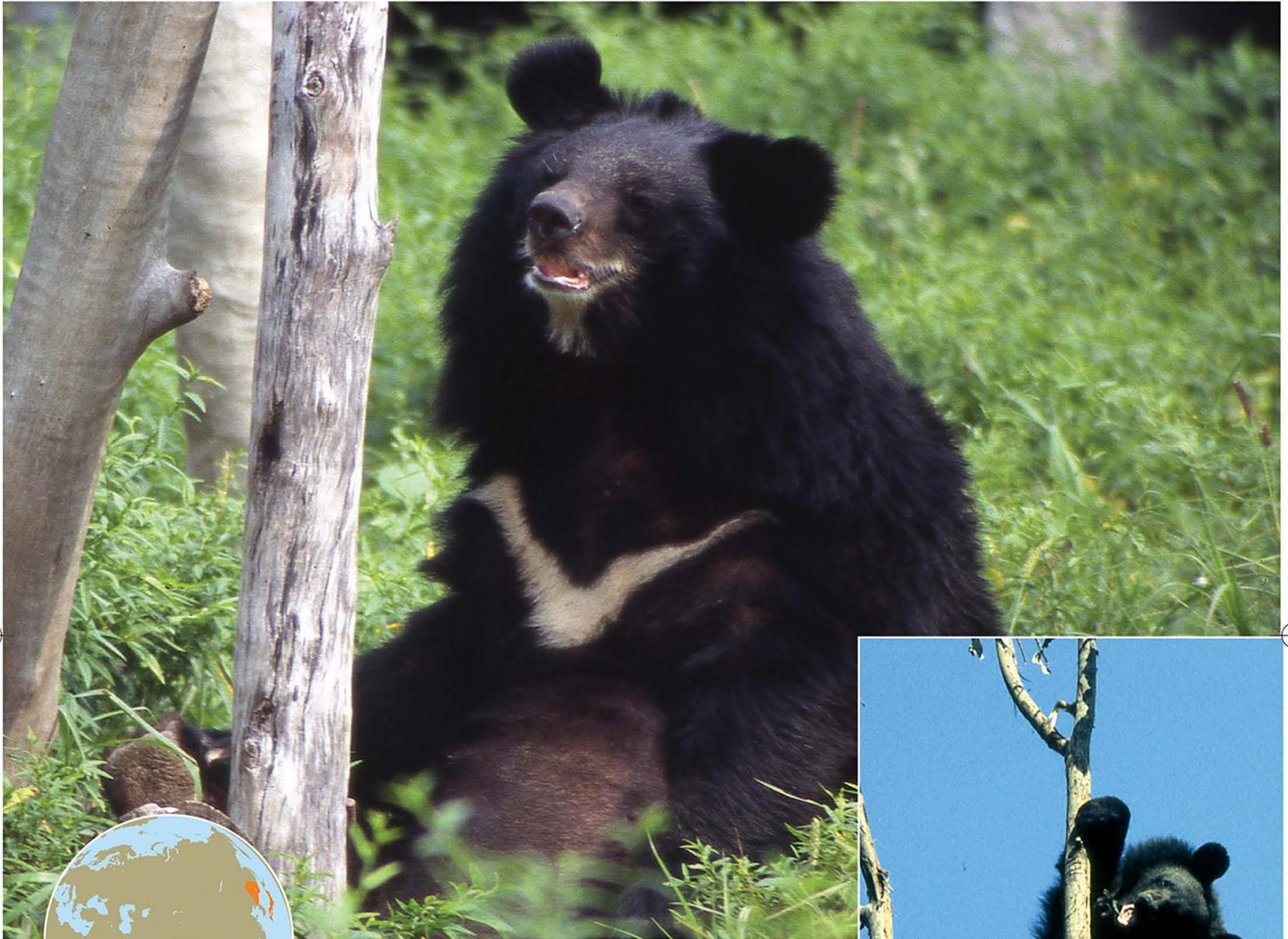
Black bears are omnivorous (feeding on both plant and animal material) and feed on a wide range of foods, depending on what is available. Insects, nuts, berries, acorns, grasses, roots, and other vegetation form the bulk of their diet in most areas. Black bears can also be efficient predators of deer fawns and moose calves. In some areas of coastal British Columbia and Alaska they also feed on spawning salmon.

### THREATS AND STATUS

American black bears are the most numerous of all bear species with around 600,000 individuals in the wild. Over 40,000 bears are killed annually for legal hunting for sport, trophy hunting and pest control and a growing number are killed just for their gall bladder, which is sought after in Traditional Chinese Medicine. Hunters using dogs and bows and inexperienced hunters in general can all cause bears to suffer greatly. This species is listed on Appendix II of CITES\*.

\*See page 15 of *Bear Facts* brochure for an explanation of CITES.

# ASIATIC BLACK BEAR **BEAR**



## ASIATIC BLACK BEAR (*Ursus thibetanus*)

Asiatic black bears, also known as Moon bears, are found throughout Asia. There are around 60,000 in the wild and populations are threatened by destruction of forest habitats and by hunting for gall bladders and other body parts. At least 13,000 Asiatic black bears are farmed for their bile for which they are kept in very small cages. In Pakistan around 50 bears are used in bear baiting with dogs, and around 300 are used as dancing bears.



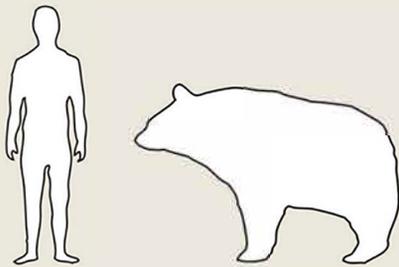
# Bears of the World

## ASIATIC BLACK BEAR

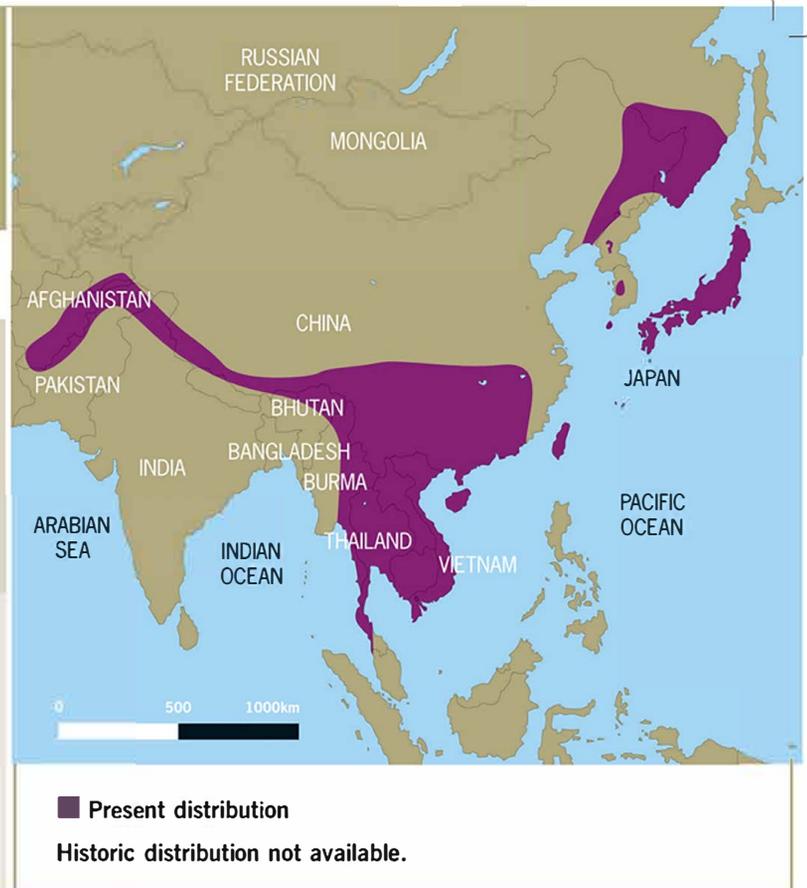
**Lifespan:** 25 years in the wild

**Size:** Adult males are around 1.9 metres in length

**Weight:** Adult males range from 100 to 200 kg  
Adult females range from 50 to 125 kg  
*Their fur often makes them appear larger.*



Comparative size of Asiatic black bear and 1.80 metre man



### APPEARANCE

This medium-sized Black bear has a light muzzle and a long-haired ruff around the neck. It has a white patch on the chest, which is often in the shape of a V or crescent – like a moon, giving the bear its other name of Moon bear. Some bears may be browner in colour.

### HABITAT

Asiatic black bears live mainly in forested areas and spend much time high in the trees, where they make nests of broken branches to sleep. They are mainly nocturnal. In summer, they often live in forested mountain areas, descending to lower elevations during winter. In the northern parts of their range, such as in northern China and Japan, they hibernate in dens during winter. Where these bears are found in warmer and more southerly climates, such as Thailand and Vietnam, they do not hibernate.

### DISTRIBUTION

Asiatic black bears are found over a wide area of southern Asia. They occur along the mountains from Afghanistan, through Pakistan, northern India and Nepal, to Vietnam, Thailand, Cambodia and north-eastern China. They are also found in south-eastern Russia, in Taiwan and Japan.

### REPRODUCTION

Sexual maturity in females is thought to occur at three to four years of age. Mating occurs in June and July, with births between December and February. In Pakistan, mating has been reported to occur in October, with cubs being born in February. They are

weaned at less than six months old, but may stay with their mothers for two to three years. These bears live to around 25 years in the wild.

### DIET

Asiatic black bears feed on a wide range of foods, including many plants, fruits, insects and other invertebrates, small vertebrates and carrion. They occasionally kill domestic livestock.

### THREATS AND STATUS

Asiatic black bears are threatened by destruction of forest habitat and by hunting for gall bladders and other body parts. In China, over 9,000 Asiatic black bears are kept in small cages in 'bear farms', where they have their bile drained each day. Bear bile is used in traditional medicines, wines and tonics in China and other Asian countries. In Pakistan, Asiatic black bears are used as dancing bears and for the cruel sport of bear baiting. Globally, the number of individuals in the wild is unknown but is believed to be around 60,000. This species is listed in CITES\* Appendix I as a threatened species.

\*See page 15 of *Bear Facts* brochure for an explanation of CITES.

Bears of the World

# BROWN BEAR



## **BROWN BEAR** (*Ursus arctos*)

Brown bears are the most widespread of all bear species, ranging across North America, through Europe, northern Russia and Asia as far as Japan. There are around 200,000 left in the wild. They are threatened by habitat destruction and in many countries are hunted for trophies or killed for being pests when they destroy crops or farmers' beehives or come into towns to feed from rubbish bins.



# Bears of the World

## BROWN BEAR

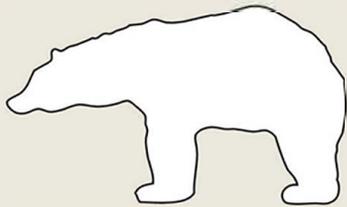
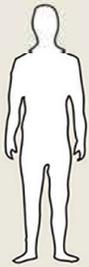
**Lifespan:** 20 to 25 years in the wild

**Size:** Adult males 2.5 metres in length

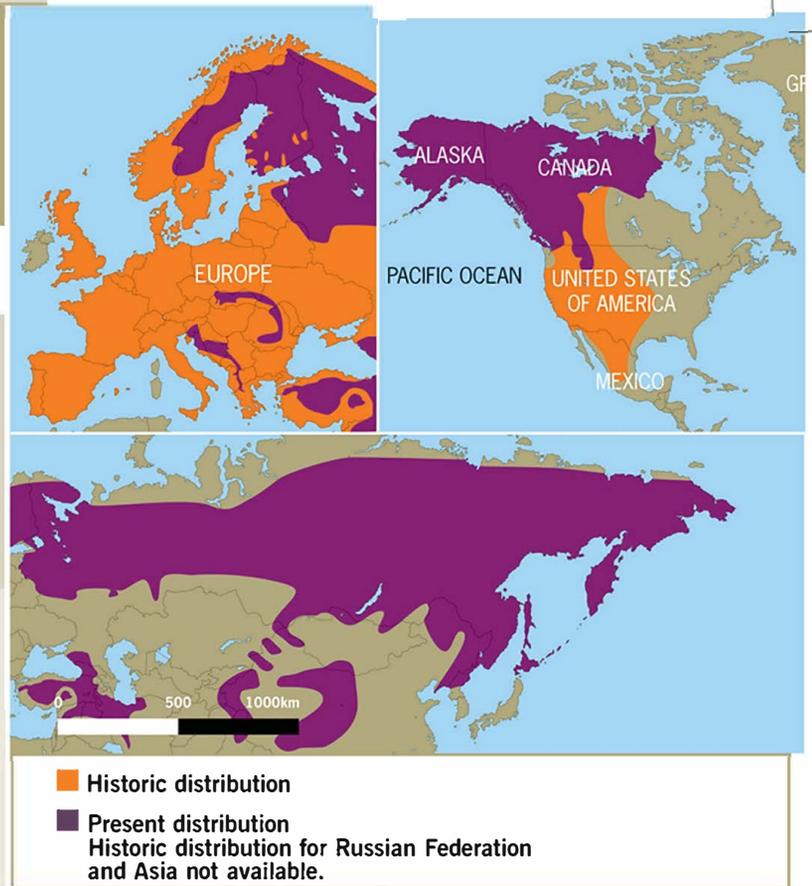
**Weight:** Adult males range from 135 to 390 kg

Adult females range from 95 to 205 kg

*The largest Brown bears are found on the offshore islands of coastal Alaska, such as Kodiak and Admiralty.*



Comparative size of Brown bear and 1.80 metre man



### APPEARANCE

The Brown bear, although usually dark brown, can vary from a light creamy shade through to almost black. The long guard hairs over the shoulders and back are often tipped with white, giving it a 'grizzled' appearance – hence the common name in North America of Grizzly bear. The Brown bear is characterised by a distinctive hump over the shoulders, a slightly flat profile to the face, and long claws on the front paws.

### HABITAT

Brown bears occupy a wide range of habitats from dense forests to subalpine meadows and Arctic tundra. They were once abundant on the central plains of North America, but have since been hunted extensively, pushing the remaining populations into the remote forests and mountains.

### DISTRIBUTION

The Brown bear is the most widespread bear species, ranging across North America, through northern Russia and Asia and into the northern island of Hokkaido in Japan. Localised populations are found in Europe, with small numbers in Greece, Italy, France and Spain. In North America, Brown bears are found in western Canada and Alaska, but only around a thousand are left in the states of Wyoming, Montana, Idaho, and Washington.

### REPRODUCTION

Male and female Brown bears reach sexual maturity at four to seven years of age. Mating takes place from early May to mid-July but implantation of the

fertilised egg does not occur until perhaps October or November. At birth, cubs weigh 340 to 680 grams. Between one and four cubs are born between January and March. Cubs remain with their mothers for at least two-and-a-half years. A Brown bear's life span in the wild is 20 to 25 years.

### DIET

Brown bears are omnivores but mainly eat vegetation such as grasses, sedges, bulbs, and roots. They also eat insects such as ants, fish, honey, and small mammals, and in some areas they have become significant predators of large hoofed mammals such as various deer species. Brown bears congregate in high densities where food is abundant, such as at salmon streams or garbage dumps.

### THREATS AND STATUS

They are threatened by destruction of forest habitat due to human activities. In many countries they are hunted for sport or as pests. In Europe they were caught from the wild to be used as dancing bears but this cruel practice is being eradicated. Most populations of Brown bear are listed in CITES\* Appendix II, with some more threatened populations in Bhutan, China and Mongolia being protected in Appendix I. There are around 200,000 left in the wild.

\*See page 15 of Bear Facts brochure for an explanation of CITES.

Bears of the World

# POLAR BEAR



© Tom Mangelsen



## POLAR BEAR (*Ursus maritimus*)

Polar bears are the largest of all bears, with males weighing up to 800 kilograms. They are specifically adapted to survival in the harsh Arctic environment. Amongst other adaptations, they have a thick layer of fat and small ears to prevent excess heat loss. Polar bears are the most carnivorous of all the bears. There are around 25,000 living in the wild. Pollution, trophy hunting and global warming all pose a threat to Polar bear survival.



# Bears of the World

## POLAR BEAR

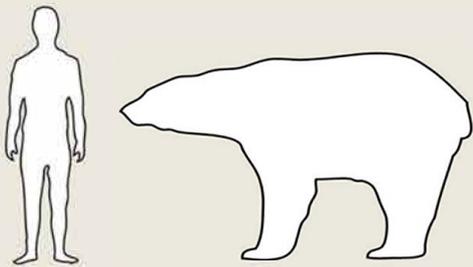
**Lifespan:** 25 years in the wild

**Size:** Adult males are over 2.5 metres in length

**Weight:** Adult males are over 800 kg

Adult females are around 300 kg

*The Polar bear is the largest land carnivore in the world today.*



Comparative size of Polar bear and 1.80 metre man



■ Present distribution  
Historic distribution not available.

### APPEARANCE

Although they are white bears, Polar bear fur is actually transparent, and their skin is black. Each hair shaft is hollow and reflects the visible light, giving the fur its white or cream appearance. Polar bears have a smaller head and longer neck than other bears, and no shoulder hump. Their ears are also smaller, to prevent excess heat loss in the freezing Arctic conditions. Unlike other bears the soles of their feet are padded with fur and covered by small soft bumps known as papillae. This gives them a better grip on the ice.

### HABITAT

The inhospitable Arctic sea and ice are home to the Polar bear. The bears tend to stay near to the southern edge of the polar ice sheets, where they prey on seals. They can travel up to 20 kilometres per day. These bears are excellent swimmers and close their nostrils and flatten their ears when underwater. Their fore paws have webbed membranes to assist swimming and a thick layer of fat under the skin prevents the bears from freezing in the icy sea. Winter temperatures in the Arctic often plunge to  $-40^{\circ}\text{C}$  but the Polar bear's body temperature remains at  $37^{\circ}\text{C}$  (an average body temperature for mammals).

### DISTRIBUTION

Polar bears are found throughout the Arctic regions of the USA, Canada, Greenland, Norway and Russia. Around 60% of the world's Polar bears are found in Canada. The farthest south that Polar bears live all year round is James Bay in Canada, which is at about the same latitude as London, England.

\* See page 15 of *Bear Facts* brochure for an explanation of CITES.

### REPRODUCTION

Polar bears mate between April and May. Implantation and development of the fertilised egg is delayed until late September or early October and the cubs are born between late November and early January. At birth, cubs weigh 600 to 700 grams. Two or three cubs are usually born and they remain with their mothers until they are two-and-a-half years of age; females do not normally breed more than once every three years. Polar bears can live for around 25 years of age in the wild.

### DIET

Polar bears are the most carnivorous of all bear species. They have adapted to a life in the harshest icy conditions, where the plant life is covered by snow for much of the year. When the ice melts, the bears feed on new growths of plants, berries and even mushrooms and birds' eggs, but their main food supply comes in the form of seals (mainly ringed seals), walrus calves, fish and sea birds. When eating seals, they feed mainly on the blubber (fat) as this contains the most energy. They may eat 50 kilograms of blubber in one meal.

### THREATS AND STATUS

Polar bears are listed in CITES\* Appendix II. Due to protection measures the wild population is stable at around 25,000-27,000 bears. They are threatened by pollution caused by oil exploration and by potentially toxic chemicals such as PCBs in the Arctic environment. Climate change is threatening Polar bears with starvation – the ice flows form later reducing the time available to Polar bears at their hunting grounds. Bears are also hunted for their gall bladders and for sport.

# SLOTH BEAR



© E. A. Kuttapan



## SLOTH BEAR (*Melursus ursinus*)

Sloth bears are mostly found in India and Sri Lanka, but their range extends to Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan. They feed extensively on termites and use long powerful claws to break open termite mounds. There are less than 25,000 in the wild. Widespread deforestation is the main threat to their survival, but Sloth bears are also killed for trophies and their gall bladders. Cubs are also captured and trained as dancing bears. There are more than 1,000 dancing bears in India.



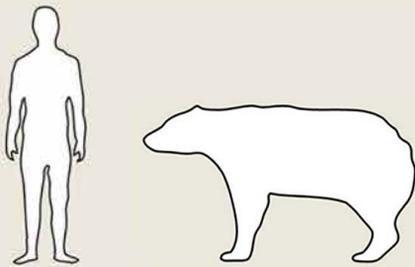
# Bears of the World

## SLOTH BEAR

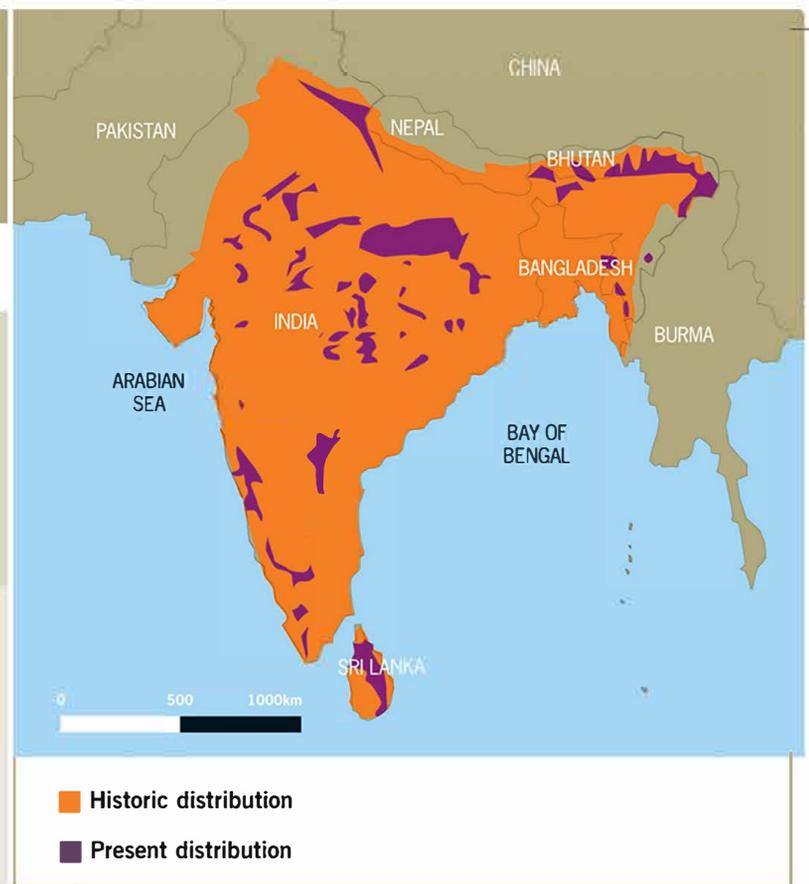
**Lifespan:** 25 years in the wild

**Size:** Adults are 1.5 to 1.9 metres in length

**Weight:** Adult males range from 80 to 145 kg  
Adult females range from 55 to 95 kg  
*Their shaggy coat makes them appear larger.*



Comparative size of Sloth bear and 1.80 metre man



### APPEARANCE

The Sloth bear is a medium-sized bear with a long black shaggy coat, which is particularly dense over the shoulders. They have a distinctive whitish or yellowish chest patch in the shape of a wide U. The snout is light-coloured and mobile. They lack the upper two middle incisor teeth, which is a specialised adaptation for sucking up termites and other insects. The front paws have curved claws up to eight centimetres long, used for digging.

### HABITAT

Sloth bears live in a variety of habitats, from the dry thorn forests and grasslands of northern India to the more humid tropical forests in the south. Their most favoured habitat seems to be the dry, deciduous, tall grass forests of central India.

### DISTRIBUTION

Most Sloth bears are found in India and Sri Lanka, but they have also been reported in Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan.

### REPRODUCTION

Mating generally occurs from May to July. Gestation (the period from mating to birth) lasts from six to seven months. Most litters consist of either one or two cubs, which are born in earth dens. Cubs stay with their mother for up to two-and-a-half years, and are often transported around by clinging to the fur on their mother's back, even when fleeing from danger. These bears live for about 25 years in the wild.

### DIET

Sloth bears feed extensively on termites and have special adaptations for doing this. The bear uses its long powerful claws to break open termite mounds. The naked lips are capable of protruding, and the inner pair of upper incisors are missing, forming a gap through which termites can be sucked. The sucking noises made by feeding in this manner can be heard from over 100 metres away. They also eat eggs, other insects, honeycombs, dead animals, and various kinds of vegetation. Their diet varies between termites and ants and fruit depending on the season.

### THREATS AND STATUS

Widespread deforestation is the main threat to Sloth bears. Their habitat is left patchy and Sloth bear populations outside protected areas are decreasing. Young Sloth bears are captured and trained as dancing bears, which usually results in the mother bears being killed. Large numbers of Sloth bears are killed by poachers for the trade in bear paws and gall bladders. The population size is unknown, but there are believed to be less than 25,000 bears in the wild. They are listed in CITES\* Appendix I.

\* See page 15 of *Bear Facts* brochure for an explanation of CITES.

Bears of the World

# SPECTACLED BEAR



**SPECTACLED BEAR** (*Tremarctos ornatus*)

Spectacled bears are the only bear species native to South America. They are found in a range of habitats including rain forest, cloud forest and scrub desert along the Andean mountain range. Their diet is extremely varied and consists of fruit, berries, honey and also agricultural crops such as maize and sugar cane. There are around 20,000 left in the wild. Human encroachment into the bears' habitat is the main threat to their survival – farmers often view the bears as pests and kill them.



# Bears of the World

## SPECTACLED BEAR

**Lifespan:** 25 years in the wild

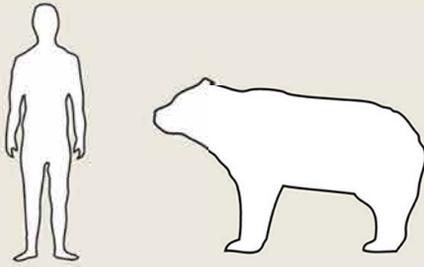
**Size:** Adults measure up to 2 metres in length

**Weight:** Adult males can be over 170 kg

*Both sexes have tails about eight centimetres long.*

*Females are smaller, two-thirds the size of males.*

*At birth, cubs weigh from 300 to 360 grams.*



Comparative size of Spectacled bear and 1.80 metre man



■ Present distribution

■ Protected areas

The historical distribution is not available

### APPEARANCE

The Spectacled bear is small and dark, ranging in colour from black to brown with distinctive circular or semicircular white markings around the eyes, giving the impression of spectacles. These light to golden marks often extend over its muzzle and down to its chest, varying from bear to bear. The fur is somewhat shaggy.

### HABITAT

Spectacled bears are highly adaptable and are found in a wide range of habitats around the South American Andes, including rain forest, cloud forest, dry forest, steppe lands, and coastal scrub desert. Possibly because of loss of habitat and persecution by humans, they appear to be more common in heavy forest.

### DISTRIBUTION

This is the only bear species native to South America or the southern hemisphere. It is mainly found in fragmented small populations in the Andes of Venezuela, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia.

### REPRODUCTION

Females reach sexual maturity at around four years old. They seem to have adapted to breed at various times of the year from March to October, depending on the fruiting season, with gestation periods lasting between six and eight months. Young are usually born between December and February, in time for the fruiting season. Their lifespan in the wild is around 25 years.

### DIET

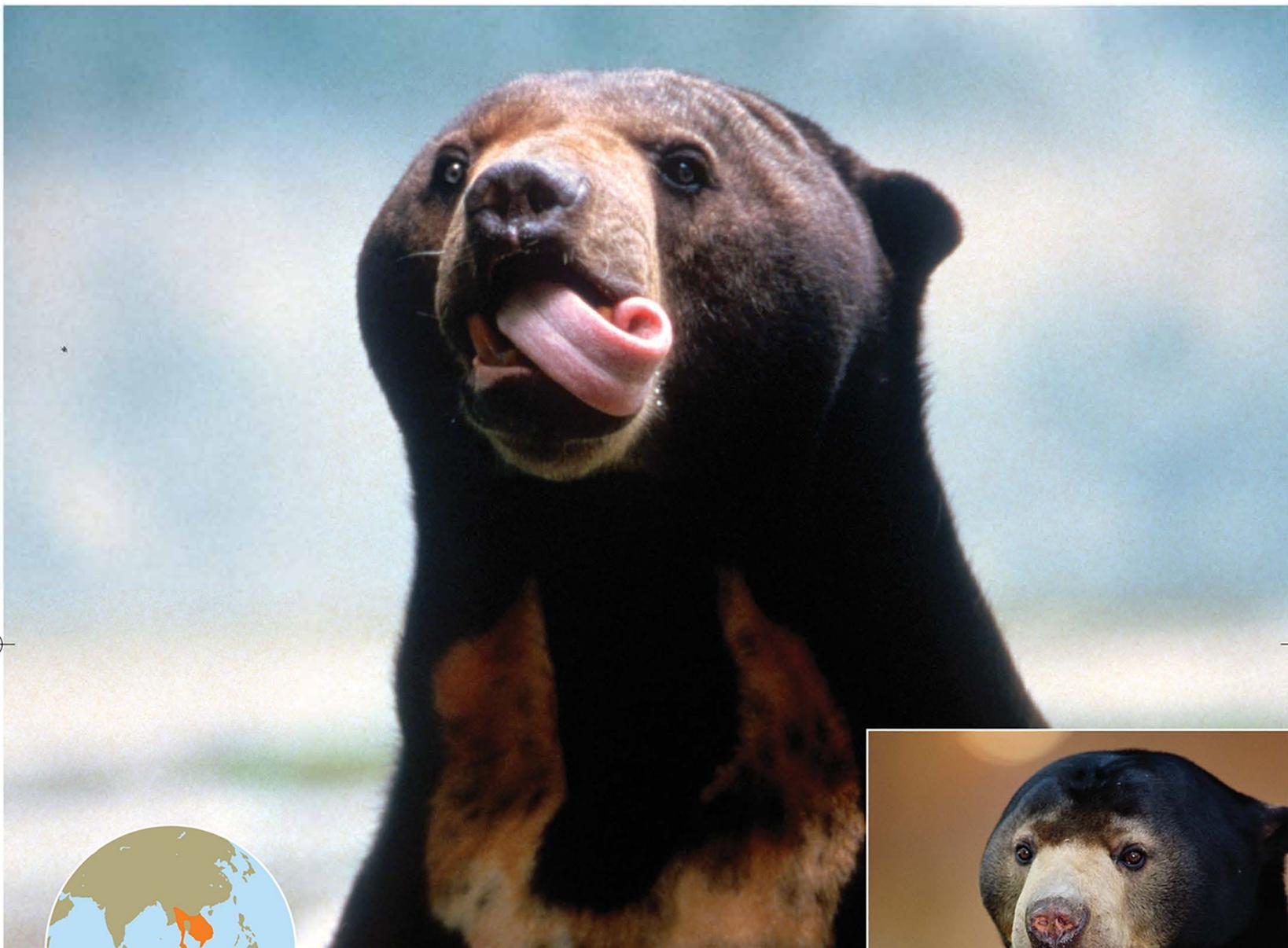
Compared to other bears, Spectacled bears have a mostly vegetarian diet. However, meat can make up a small percentage of their diet at certain times of the year when they will eat insects, small animals and even take cattle given the opportunity. Their main diet is extremely varied and consists of fruit, berries, honey and also agricultural crops such as maize and sugar cane. Cactus, tough palm nuts and spiny-leaved bromeliad plants rejected by most other animals are easily chewed up by the bears' strong teeth and powerful jaws. Spectacled bears often build tree nests as a platform to feed from fruit-laden branches and to sleep in.

### THREATS AND STATUS

The main threat is human encroachment into the bears' habitat. Slashing and burning for crop and livestock farming has taken a heavy toll on the bears' habitat. Farmers view the bears as pests and kill them. There is also a trade in bear parts for traditional local medicine. Estimates vary but there may be as few as 20,000 left in the wild. They are perhaps the most threatened of all the bears (except the Giant panda) and are listed in CITES\* Appendix I.

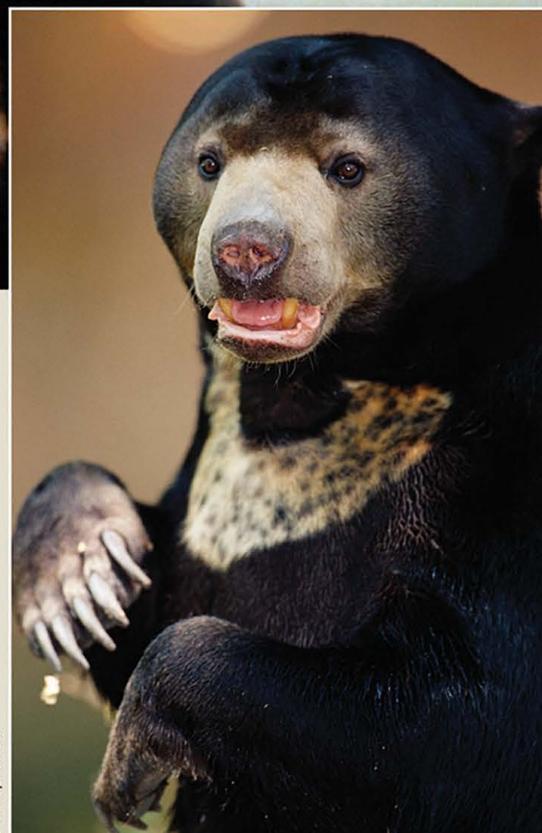
\* See page 15 of *Bear Facts* brochure for an explanation of CITES.

# SUN BEAR



**SUN BEAR** (*Helarctos malayanus*)

Sun bears are the smallest of all bear species. They are characterised by short, dense black fur and a very long, flexible tongue which is used to lap up honey and insects. Sun bears inhabit tropical rain forests throughout Southeast Asia. They spend much of their time high up in trees, using their long claws to climb easily in search of fruit. Numbers in the wild are unknown but populations are threatened by destruction of forest habitat and by capture of young bears for the pet trade.



© Anup Shah

# Bears of the World

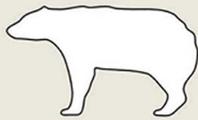
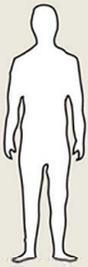
## SUN BEAR

**Lifespan:** 25 years in captivity

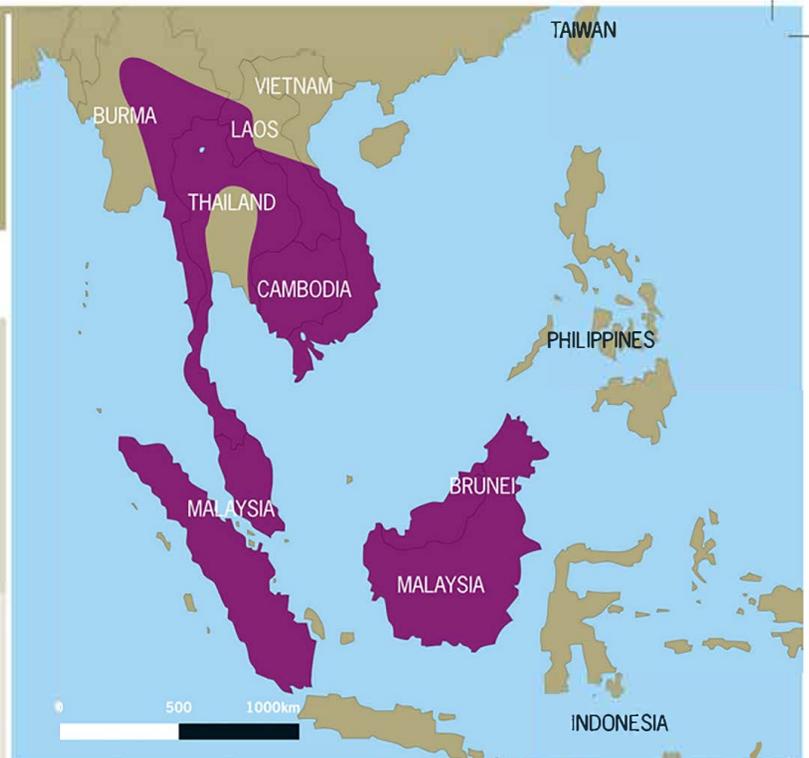
**Size:** Adults are around 1 to 1.5 metres in length

**Weight:** Adults range from 40 to 65 kg

*Sun bears are generally about the size of a medium-sized dog.*



Comparative size of Sun bear and 1.80 metre man



■ Present distribution  
Historic distribution not available.

### APPEARANCE

The Sun bear is the smallest bear and has a more dog-like appearance than any of the other species. It has bandy legs and the paws have hairless soles and long powerful claws for digging and climbing. The black fur, unlike other bears', is very short and dense. Sun bears get their common name from the yellowish U-shaped crescent on the chest. They have a very long, flexible tongue which is used to lap up honey and insects.

### HABITAT

These bears inhabit dense tropical rain forest, spending much of their time high up in the trees, using their long claws to climb easily in search of fruits. They even make nests of broken branches high in the canopy in which to sleep. On the ground, they continually search through the leaves and fallen branches for food. As food is available all year round in the tropical forest these bears do not hibernate.

### DISTRIBUTION

Less is known about the Sun bear than any of the other bears of the world. Their range today is diminishing, but they are still found in the tropical forests of Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand, Malaysia, Borneo and Sumatra. A few are believed to be left in India or southern China.

### REPRODUCTION

Females are mature at three years old, and one or two cubs are born after a 95-day gestation period. In some captive bears this has been twice as long, suggesting there has been a delayed implantation of

the egg. Newborn cubs are blind, hairless, and weigh approximately 300 grams. Cubs usually stay with their mother for several years. Lifespan in the wild is unknown but in captivity they can live up to 25 years.

### DIET

Sun bears eat many plants and fruits including mushrooms and the growing tips of palm trees. The bears have a particular fondness for honey, using their powerful claws to tear open bees' nests in trees in search of this delicacy. They also eat a variety of insects, including termites, and any lizards, rodents, eggs or even small mammals that they come across in their constant search for food. They are mainly nocturnal feeders, spending much of the daylight hours sleeping in trees.

### THREATS AND STATUS

The main threat to Sun bears is the destruction of forest habitat through large-scale timber logging and mining industries and for conversion to agricultural land. Forest fires in Borneo have also destroyed large areas of forest habitat in recent years. The capture of young bears for the pet trade, and for the sale of bear paws and gall bladders, also takes a high toll on this species. Numbers are unknown. Very little information is known about Sun bears in the wild. They are considered to be a threatened species and are listed in CITES\* Appendix I.

\* See page 15 of *Bear Facts* brochure for an explanation of CITES.

# GIANT PANDA



### GIANT PANDA (*Ailuropoda melanoleuca*)

Giant pandas are found only in remote areas of southwest China, in high altitude bamboo forests. They have six digits on their front paws. The extra digit is used as an opposable thumb to grasp bamboo shoots when feeding. Adults can eat over 30 kilograms of bamboo shoots daily. Giant pandas are the most endangered of all bear species, with only 1,600 believed to live in the wild. The main threat to pandas is the destruction of their bamboo habitat to make agricultural land.



# Bears of the World

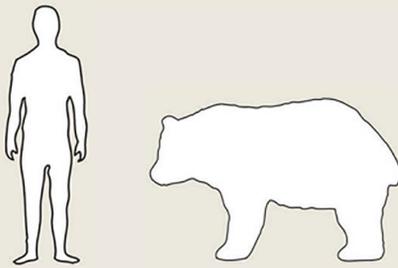
## GIANT PANDA

**Lifespan:** 25 to 30 years in the wild

**Size:** Adults are around 1.6 to 1.9 metres in length

**Weight:** Adult males range from 85 to 125 kg

Adult females range between 70 to 100 kg



Comparative size  
of Giant panda and  
1.80 metre man



### APPEARANCE

It's black and white fur, with black around the eyes and ears on a white furred face has made the Giant panda one of the most easily recognised animals in the world. Pandas have larger heads, compared to their bodies, than other bears, but their most unusual characteristic is that they have six digits on their front paws. This extra digit has developed from the wrist bone, and is used as an opposable thumb by which the bear can grasp bamboo shoots when feeding.

### HABITAT

Giant pandas live in high altitude bamboo forests (between 1,200 and 3,500 metres) in the mountains of China. The home range of Giant pandas tends to be around eight square kilometres for males and four square kilometres for females. They spend most of their time on the ground but are good climbers. They often sleep in tree branches and are mainly active at night.

### DISTRIBUTION

Pandas are only found in six small remote areas of south-west China, in Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu provinces. In total their range covers just 14,000 square kilometres.

### REPRODUCTION

Pandas are sexually mature at around five years old and mating takes place from March to May. They give birth in the safety of caves or in tree hollows, where one or two cubs (rarely three) are born from August to September. At birth, Panda cubs weigh only around 100 grams. Cubs stay with the mother for around 18 months. In the wild the lifespan of the Giant panda ranges from 25 to 30 years.

### DIET

Ninety-nine per cent of the Giant panda's diet is bamboo. They eat the shoots, leaves, stems and branches of around 30 species of bamboo. Feeding mainly happens on the ground with the Panda stripping the bamboo leaves and stems with its opposable thumb. Its powerful jaw muscles and large teeth are used to grind and crush the bamboo stems. Adult Pandas can eat 15 kilograms of bamboo leaves and stems and when feeding on new bamboo shoots they are capable of eating over 30 kilograms daily. They do eat a small amount of other plants and occasionally they eat meat if they find dead animals.

### THREATS AND STATUS

Giant pandas are endangered, with only 1,600 believed to live in the wild. The main threat to these rare animals is deforestation of their bamboo habitat to make agricultural land. Some poaching occurs despite severe penalties. By 2004 there were around 160 Pandas in captivity, but they do not breed well under these conditions. However, zoos around the world pay high prices to 'rent' Pandas to attract customers, and there is controversy over whether or not these funds are used for panda conservation in China. Pandas are in Appendix I of CITES\*.

\*See page 15 of *Bear Facts* brochure for an explanation of CITES.