**What do black bears look like?**

Black bears are the smallest of all bears living in North America. Adults usually weigh between 90 and 450 pounds. Males are larger than females. Black bears are not always black. Some bears are brown or cinnamon or even white!

**What do black bears eat?**

Black bears are called **carnivores** (meat-eaters). In fact, for much of the year they are **herbivores** (plant-eaters). Just like humans, they are **omnivores** (they eat both meat and plants). Black bears eat a wide variety of foods. In the spring, when bears come out of their dens, there is not much food. They will eat grasses, roots, insects, and road kill (carrion). In the summer they add mushrooms, wild cherries, strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, and plums. In the fall, bears may eat for 20 hours a day. They will eat acorns, hazelnuts, and insects, including bees and yellow jackets. Eating a lot of food is important because they have to gain enough weight to survive while they **hibernate.** When natural food is hard to find, bears will sometimes search for food around people's homes and campgrounds, but if people are careful to keep food, pet food, birdseed, and garbage stored where bears cannot smell them, the bears will stay away.

**Where do black bears live?**

Black bears live where there is good **habitat** and enough food to survive. These places are usually areas with plenty of forests and streams. Black bears live in parts of Canada, the United States, and Mexico. Do black bears live where you are? If they do, it is your responsibility to learn how to live together peacefully.

**Did you know ?**

Black bears often stand up on their hind legs. People sometimes think they stand up to attack. Actually, they stand up to see, hear or smell better. Although male bears are called boars and female bears are called sows this does not mean that bears are related to hogs.

***A Bear Story***

**How Can a Bear be a Nuisance?**

Bears eat a lot. They have to do that, especially in the summer and fall. They have to be ready to hibernate during winter. When they hibernate, they don't eat at all for several months. Before they are ready to go in their dens, they must gain a lot of weight.

This is how they gain weight. During the summer, they eat berries of all kinds, insects, grubs, and honey. In the fall, they eat lots of acorns and other nuts. These are natural foods for bears.

Sometimes they can't find enough of the natural foods. Sometimes there are houses, towns, or camping areas in the places where the bears used to find berries or nuts. When bears visit neighborhoods or campgrounds, seeking these natural foods, people label them "nuisance bears."

If there are no natural foods, bears can become attracted to human food, pet food, or even garbage. They may go to a campsite or a house to find something to eat, and sometimes they get into trouble.

Many people are afraid of bears. When these people see a bear near their home or campground, they call the Wildlife Service to have the bear moved away. Sometimes they just shoot the bear without calling anyone.

Bears that stay around people are called "nuisance bears." Usually, though, the people are to blame. If people were careful about storing food and garbage, the bears would not stay around where people live. It is up to us to help keep bears away from our homes and campsites. Let's help bears stay wild and free, naturally.

* 1. When do bears eat the most? Why?
  2. When do bears hibernate?
  3. Do they eat during hibernation?
  4. Name some things that bears eat to gain weight.
  5. Where do bears find food, when natural foods are not available?
  6. Why do you think people are afraid of bears?
  7. What are bears called when they seek human food?
  8. What can happen to a "nuisance bear"?
  9. What should people do to help bears stay away from human food?

CHOOSE ONE OF THE FOLLOWING TO COMPLETE:

***Narrative:*** Write a story as if you were a bear getting ready for hibernation.

***Expository:*** Explain how a bear eats to gain weight.

***Persuasive:*** Write an essay telling people how to keep bears away from their homes. Make them understand how important this is.

Comic Strip: A detailed strip about a bear getting ready for hibernation or information about how people can keep bears away from their home.

**Black Bear Worksheet**

1. Proceed down to the second floor to the Secrets of the Forest exhibit and look for the

young black bear.

2. Without reading the captions, take a few moments to look at and describe and draw the

bear in its habitat in the museum setting.

3. What do you think this animal eats? Why?

4. How do you think the black bear is uniquely suited to live in its habitat?

5. Based on the size of this animal, and the thoughts you have about its diet, do you think

the black bear requires a large or small area in which to live and find enough food to

survive?

6. Based on what you’ve learned so far about this animal, where in North American do you

think it could successfully live (i.e. what do you think the range of this animal is)?

Why?

7. If you encountered this animal in the wild, how would you react?

8. How would you react if you encountered this animal in your back yard?

9. Now picture the mother bear, twice the size of the young bear in the exhibit, rushing out

of hiding to protect her cub. How do you feel about the young bear in your back yard

now?

**Grizzly (Brown) Bear Worksheet**

1. Locate the mounted bear on the top floor of the museum, the grizzly bear.

2. Without reading the captions, take a few moments to look at and describe and draw the bear

in it’s habitat in the museum setting in the space provided below:

3. What do you think this animal eats? Why?

4. How do you think the grizzly bear is uniquely suited to live in its habitat?

5. Based on the size of this animal, and the thoughts you have about its diet, do you think the

grizzly bear requires a large or small area in which to live and find enough food to survive?

6. Based on what you’ve learned so far about this animal, where in North American do you

think it could successfully live (i.e. what do you think the range of this animal is)? Why?

7. If you encountered this animal in the wild, how would you react?

8. How would you react if you encountered this animal in your back yard?