



Grizzly Bear

Fact Sheet



Identify Grizzly from Black Bears

Grizzly bears typically weigh 100-200 kg (females) to 200-300 kg (males) which is slightly more than black bears. Grizzly bears have a shoulder hump, range in colour from blonde to black and may have silver or light-tipped guard hairs on their head, hump and back. A grizzly bear's ears are rounded and appear smaller than the black bear, while the black bear has more pointed, noticeable ears and no shoulder hump.



Grizzly bear claws are longer than those of black bears and may have a light-coloured stripe. In grizzly bear tracks, the tips of the front claws usually leave imprints in front of the paw pad, and the toes are set in a nearly straight line. In black bear tracks, the claw imprints are difficult to see, and the front toes form an obvious arc.

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Reproduction

Grizzly bear numbers are limited by a slow reproductive rate. This is caused by a relatively high age of first reproduction, small litter sizes, and long periods between litters. In Alberta, most female grizzlies do not have their first litter until they are at least four years old and usually have only one or two cubs. The cubs are born in January or February and stay with their mother for two to five years.

Diet

Grizzly bears are omnivores, eating both vegetation and animals. They have a curious, investigative nature - an important trait that helps them find new food sources. Bears have an acute sense of smell, and they rely on it heavily to find food. A bear's diet normally consists of grasses, berries, ants and carrion. When people are careless with garbage and food storage, bears are quick to learn that easy meals can be found within human camps and communities.

“PROBLEM” Bears

Both black and grizzly bears are naturally shy of people and are reluctant to approach human territory. However, bears may be attracted to campsites or backyards by the smells of poorly stored garbage or food. Bears that have repeated contact with people with no negative consequences will lose their natural fear of people. This makes them far more likely to continue searching for food in human places. Once a bear becomes used to, or “habituated,” to humans and human food sources, they are considered “problem bears.” It is very difficult to prevent a habituated bear from returning to a known food source. If a habituated bear continues to be a threat to humans, the bear may be removed or destroyed.

Range

Grizzly bears can be found in Alberta from the Montana border, along the mountains and foothills and continuing north through the western boreal forests to High Level.

Grizzly bears require a large, diverse range. No single habitat provides all of the necessary resources to meet their needs in every season.

Grizzly bears occupy open meadows and beaver ponds, as well as dense, forested habitat that provide cover from warm, summer temperatures.

The Alberta BearSmart program seeks to reduce human-bear conflicts and increase public stewardship of black and grizzly bears in Alberta by providing strategic information and education materials to those living, working, and recreating in bear country.

For more information visit: www.bearsmart.alberta.ca



You can help protect grizzly bears. Whether working, living or recreating in bear habitat, you have a responsibility to ensure your actions do not result in the needless death of a grizzly bear.

Credit: Mike Ewald

