

Bears

There are many different types of bears in the world and they differ quite a bit depending on the type of bear being discussed. Bears are mammals and belong to the family Ursidae. The characteristics that most bears have in common is a large body with stocky legs, a long snout, shaggy hair, paws with five claws and a short tail. There are eight living species of bears and they live in a variety of habitats. They can be found all over the world, including the continents of North America, South America, Europe and Asia.

Most bears are omnivores (they have diets that consist of both plants and animals). The polar bear mostly eats other animals while the Giant Panda has a diet that consists mainly of bamboo.

The polar bear is a large, white variety that lives in northern or arctic climates. It is the world's largest carnivore species found on land. It is also the largest bear and is close in size to the Kodiak bear. Adult males can weigh up to 680 kilograms or 1,500 pounds! The female polar bear is about half the size of the male. The polar bear is closely related to the brown bear and has many features that allow it to live in cold temperatures and effectively move across snow, ice and open water. Their diet consists mostly of seals and they spend much of their time at sea. They are considered a vulnerable species, as over hunting has threatened their existence and reduced their populations. Hunting controls and limits have helped bring their population back. Global warming is now the biggest threat to the polar bear, as increased temperatures melt sea ice, thus reducing their habitat and ability to find food.

The giant panda is native to central western and south western China. They are easily recognized by the large, black patches around their eyes, ears and body. The giant panda is also on the endangered animal list, as populations have been driven out of their natural habitats because of farming, forest clearing and other development in China. People in North America can see pandas at local zoos or animal parks.

The most common bear species in North America is the North American black bear, also known as the American black bear. It can be found from Alaska in the north to Mexico in the south and from the Atlantic Ocean in the east to the Pacific Ocean in the west. It is also found in 41 of 50 U.S. states and all Canadian provinces except Prince Edward Island. It can even be found in parts of northern Mexico! It is thought that the population had grown substantially in Canada and the United States in the mid-1990s, likely due to measures designed to protect the species. The American black bear is closely related to the Asiatic black bear and is thought to have evolved in North America two million years ago. Standing up on its hind feet, an adult can be up to 7 feet tall and weigh 300 kilograms or 660 pounds.

Although most bears are considered dangerous by humans, two have managed to win our hearts. Smokey Bear helps remind us to stop forest fires and preserve our woodlands while Winnie the Pooh has provided us with hours of entertainment as he gets involved in various adventures with his friends Tigger and Piglet. You need not worry about this bear...his diet of choice is honey!