



FAST FACTS

Name: Grizzly bear

Species name: *Ursus arctos horribilus*

Average weight: 250 – 350 kg (male)
125 – 175 kg (female)

Life expectancy: 15 – 20 years

PHYSIOLOGY

The grizzly bear is the second largest land carnivore in North America. It has a strong, heavy body with an average length of 1.8 metres from nose to tail. It is distinguished from other bears by the large shoulder hump that supports its massive front legs, its extremely long front claws and the concave facial profile of its large head. The grizzly bear's fur is usually darkish brown, but can vary from ivory yellow to black. It has long hairs on its head and shoulders that often have white tips and give the bear the "grizzled" appearance from which it derives its name. Its legs and feet tend to be even darker in colour.

Despite its large size, the grizzly bear has been known to run at speeds of 55 kilometres per hour. It has well developed senses of smell and hearing that compensates for its poor eyesight.

HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

The grizzly bear is a solitary animal. Individual bears have a home range, but these may overlap and are not fiercely defended. The grizzly's habitat can range from dense forest to alpine meadow or arctic tundra. It has no predators, other than humans.

Contrary to popular belief, the grizzly bear is not a true hibernator. In the winter its body temperature may drop a few degrees and its respiration may slow slightly, but it can remain active all winter.

Although it is considered a meat-eater, the grizzly bear is actually omnivorous, which means it eats both meat and vegetation. It eats mammals and spawning salmon, when they are available, but relies mainly on vegetation for food. Plants make up 80 to 90 percent of the grizzly's diet! It eats a variety of berries to gain fat deposits that helps it survive the winter months. The grizzly bear will also take advantage of food and garbage that is left by humans, particularly at campsites and dumps.

RANGE

The grizzly bear has the widest distribution of any species of bear because it occupies a wide range of habitats. The grizzly is found in western Canada as far as the eastern boundary of Manitoba. It is also found in Alaska, Wyoming, Idaho and Washington. The grizzly bear's range has shrunk as human populations grow and occupy its territory.