



## **Brown Bear**

*Ursus arctos*

Description: One of the largest and most widely distributed bear species, brown bears weigh between 300 and 860 pounds and can be up to 9'6" in total body length.

They are usually dark brown in color but can vary from a light cream color to almost black. If the tips of the guard hairs are white, they give the bear a grizzled appearance, hence the term Grizzly bear, applied to the smaller of the two North American subspecies, *Ursus arctos horribilis*. The larger North American subspecies is *Ursus arctos middendorffi*, the Kodiak bear of the Alaskan islands of Kodiak, Shuyak and Afognak. Brown bears are distinguished by the characteristic muscle hump over the shoulders, they have a "dished" profile and longer claws on their front paws than on their rear paws.

Range: In North America, they can be found in western Canada, Alaska, Wyoming, Montana, Idaho and Washington. In Europe, they live east of the Stanovoi Range in Russia and in extremely fragmented population in France, Spain, Italy, and Greece. Other small remnant populations can be found in India, Pakistan, Japan, Korea, China, Mongolia, Syria, Iraq, Iran and Turkey.



Habitat: Brown bears inhabit dense forests, tundra and lower alpine mountain regions.

Diet: Brown bears are omnivorous, eating a mixed diet of grasses, fruits, bulbs and roots, insects, fish and small animals. In a few areas they are known to be predators of larger animals such as caribou and moose. They will also scavenge carrion when available, including whale, walrus and seals that have washed up on shore.

**Social Organization:** Brown bears are solitary animals except for females with cubs. They are territorial with males having larger territories overlapping the smaller territories of several females. Brown bears can be seen in close proximity in areas of extremely abundant food sources, such as dumps sites, berry patches and salmon spawning areas.

**Reproduction:** Female bears reach sexual maturity around four and a half years of age. Mating will occur between May and July, with a pair coming together for one or two weeks and mating several times. With delayed implantation, cubs are born between January and March. A female can have up to four cubs which will stay with her for up to two and a half years.

**Conservation Status:** Brown bears are listed as Appendix II in CITES. They are also listed in the lower 48 states as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act with the US Fish and Wildlife Service.

**Threats to Survival:** Brown bears in some areas live in isolated pockets of land, all subject to extreme human encroachment and ensuing habitat loss. Major threats to survival include habitat and population fragmentation, excessive human-caused mortality and habitat encroachment especially in habitats near human development. Illegal hunting continues to be a threat, both by landowners seeing the bears as threats to their livestock and poachers interested in their hides, teeth, claws, and internal organs for the Asian medicinal market especially in Asia (although the impact of illegal hunting for the trade in brown bear parts in North America seems minimal).

**Zoo Programs:** Since brown bears in large population groups are considered fairly stable, it is the AZA Bear Advisory Group recommendation that no captive breeding be done with this species. Brown bears currently being held should be used for their educational value and the grizzly bear should be maintained over other brown bear types. Captive brown bears are currently being used for contraceptive studies to benefit all bear species. It is true that the highly fragmented populations such as the French, Spanish, Italian, Pakistani, Indian and Greek brown bear are in need of intensive management and regional Brown bear registries should be kept.