

Teacher Background Information

There are eight different kinds of bears – brown bears, American black bears, polar bears, giant panda bears, Asiatic black bears, sloth bears, spectacled bears and sun bears.

- Koala bears are not real bears. They are marsupials.
- More bears are dying each year than are being born. Polar bears and American black bears are safe now. All other kinds of bears need protection. We need to save large areas where bears and other animals can live safely and not be hurt.

	American Black Bears	Asiatic Black Bears
Habitat (home)	Mostly in forests, but also in swamps and deserts throughout North America.	Prefer heavily forested areas, particularly in the hills and mountains and moist tropical forests in Southern Asia.
Diet	Plants, leaves, fruits, berries, nuts, roots, honey, insects, and small mammals.	Insects, small mammals, birds, carrion, bee nests, and fruit.
Physical Description	<p>Long, thick fur is brown or black. They are flat-footed and their front claws are longer than their back claws.</p> <p>6 feet long 300 pounds</p>	<p>Medium-sized bear. 50–74 inches long. 220–440 pounds. Females are smaller.</p> <p>They are normally blackish in color, with lighter muzzles and a distinct V-shaped patch of cream-colored fur on their chest. A brown phase also occurs. The ears of an Asiatic black bear appear much larger than those of other bear species.</p>
Special Features/Adaptations		
Interesting Info	<p>They are good swimmers and can climb trees. They have a good sense of smell but cannot see very well. They are afraid of grizzly bears.</p> <p>Two or three cubs are born during the winter while the mother is hibernating. They stay with their mom for one year.</p>	
Threats	Currently safe but real threat exists due to illegal poaching for the Asian medicinal market.	Poachers

	Brown Bears	Panda Bears	Polar Bears
Habitat (home)	Cool mountain forests and river valleys.	The mountains of China.	The Arctic (Greenland, Norway, former Soviet Union, Canada, and Alaska).
Diet	Plants, roots, berries, fungi, fish, small mammals, and large insects.	Bamboo (up to thirty-three pounds a day). Very rarely eat other plants or scavenge the meat of dead deer.	They are fierce predators who eat mostly seals and some walruses. Polar bears do not drink water but do occasionally eat berries or other plants when available.
Physical Features	Thick fur that can be black/brown or brown/blond. They have a big head, a long muzzle and a large hump on their shoulder. Females are about two-thirds the size of a male. 300–860 pounds Up to 9 feet and 6 inches long	3 to 4 feet tall 250 pounds	They have a small head and black nose. Their toes are slightly webbed so they can swim. They paddle with their front feet and steer with their hind feet. 10 feet long 1,700 pounds
Special Features/Adaptations	They can run up to 35 mph.		They can run up to 25 mph and are powerful swimmers. Polar bears have two types of fur: Thick, wooly fur close to their skin that keeps them warm, and hollow guard hairs that stick up and protect them from getting wet. These guard hairs are like drinking straws and are clear-colored (not white). Under the fur, they have black skin. This helps them absorb more heat from the sun. They also have a thick layer of fat under the skin that helps keep them warm. www.polarbearsalive.org/facts4.htm#anchor823832
Interesting Info	They are fierce predators and are mostly nocturnal. Although they sleep in dens during the winter, they are not true hibernators and can easily be awakened.		
Threats	Human encroachment and ensuing habitat loss. Illegal hunting.	Deforestation and poaching.	Massive oil spills and accumulating toxins in their food supply. A recent report said global warming is now affecting them as well.

	Sun Bears	Sloth Bears	Spectacled Bears
Habitat (home)	Lowland tropical rain forests in Southeast Asia.	Prefer to live in grasslands and forested areas at predominantly lower altitudes in India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka.	They are most often found in what is called the cloud forest, a lush, misty ecosystem in the Andes Mountains.
Diet	Birds, small mammals, termites, the young tips of palm trees, and the nests of wild bees.	Mainly termites. Other items are fruit, plants, eggs, insects, honey, and carrion.	Fruit, rodents, and insects.
Physical Description	Smallest bear, 60–145 pounds, 48–60 inches long Short, sleek black fur with a golden or white colored crescent shape on their chest and the same lighter color around their muzzle and eyes. The muzzle is short.	Medium-sized bear, weighing between 175 and 310 pounds and is 60–75 inches long. It has a very shaggy coat of black fur, with gray and brown hairs mixed in. On the chest there is a white or cream colored U- or Y-shaped patch of fur. This same lighter color occurs around the muzzle and sometimes extends around the eyes.	Small black bear with cream-colored facial markings around its eyes. Females weigh about 150 lbs and males may weigh 250 pounds. They are about 60–72 inches long.
Special Features / Adaptations	The paws of the sun bear are large with naked soles, possibly an adaptation for better tree climbing.	Its upper incisors are missing, forming a gap, and its lips can extend to form a tube. With this, the sloth bear is able to suck up the termites, making a sound that can be heard over 330 feet away.	They are excellent tree climbers and tree foragers.
Interesting Info			Are thought to play a vital role in the forest by scattering seeds through their droppings.
Threats	Habitat loss and poaching.	Habitat loss and poaching. Natural predators such as wild dogs, tigers, and leopards.	Habitat destruction and hunting.