



Bears in Mind - Fund for bears
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Spectacled bear (*Tremarctos ornatus*)



The spectacled bear lives in the Andes mountain range in South-America, in Ecuador, Colombia, Bolivia, Chile and Peru. Little is known about the spectacled bear in the wild, since research into this species has so far been limited. Also, the spectacled bear is usually found in remote and barren regions. This is probably also one of the reasons why this bear is not yet extinct. Their habitat is however fragmented which could result in bear populations that are ultimately too small to survive.

Origin

The spectacled bear has evolved from the short-faced bears, which were mainly found in America. It is the only bear species that is native to South America. The spectacled bear is the last remaining representative of the short-faced bear. The first real spectacled bear dates back to the Pleistocene era, approximately 2 million years ago. The Native Americans have given the spectacled bear all kinds of special names. The bear is also known as 'achupalla' ('tree-bark eater') or 'ucumari' which means 'beer with eye in hole'. These are fitting descriptions for this species.

Habitat

The spectacled bear has a strong preference for the tropical climate. Its habitat is therefore around the equator. The spectacled bear is also found on steppes and even in desert areas; however, they mostly live in the mountain forests of the Andes at an elevation of about 2,000 meters. This is why this bear is also called the Andean bear. The spectacled bear is highly adapted to its habitat and is an excellent climber.

Appearance

The spectacled bear has light markings around the eyes, which make it look as if the eyes are set in holes. The fur ranges from dark brown to black, with yellow-white markings across the snout and sometimes the head. Some spectacled bears also have white lines across the face, neck and chest. The marking around the eyes is however typical of the spectacled bear and every bear has its unique marking. The spectacled bear has short and thick fur and strong claws. Where other bears have 14 pairs of ribs, the spectacled bear only has 13. The spectacled bear is a relatively small bear.

Diet

The spectacled bear has a strong preference for the hearts of the bromeliad plant, which are his favourite kind of food. When blossoming, this plant produces an abundance of sugar. The spectacled bear is mainly a plant eater and feeds on nuts, fruits, laurel, figs, young leaves, tree bark, seeds, herbs and honey. Occasionally, the bear will also eat mice, rabbits, insects or even lamb or deer. However, this rarely happens and the spectacled bear is generally vegetarian.

Bears in Mind is door de Belastingdienst aangemerkt als algemeen nut beogende instelling. Dit maakt uw giften aan Bears in Mind aftrekbaar voor de inkomstenbelasting.



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<p>Size 120 - 210 cm length 70 - 90 cm height</p>	<p>Weight 60 – 175 kg.</p>	<p>Lifespan Approximately 20 – 25 years</p>
<p>Sexual maturity Female: 4 years</p>	<p>Mating season April - June</p>	<p>Gestation period 225 - 240 days</p>
<p>Number of litters Around 1 x per 2 years</p>	<p>Number of cubs 1 to 3</p>	<p>Weight at birth About 300 grams</p>
<p>Lactation period Approximately 1 year</p>		

Hibernation

Spectacled bears do not seem to hibernate. The spectacled bear lives in a tropical climate and does not need to hibernate, since the climate is mild and food is plentiful.

Social behaviour

The spectacled bear is solitary. They tend to avoid each other, but are not territorial. Out of all bears, the spectacled bear makes the most use of trees: to search for food, to escape but also to rest. They build a nest or feeding platform by pulling leafy branches together.

Spectacled bears in captivity

In Europe, 22 zoos have spectacled bears. Reproduction of the spectacled bear is a problem and the population in captivity remains therefore relatively small. A few years ago, Zürich zoo constructed a semi-natural enclosure where spectacled bears and coatis live together.

Status

The spectacled bear is one of the most endangered bear species, despite its large habitat and perfect adaptation to living in the most barren parts of the Andes and beyond. Its **IUCN-status** is '**Vulnerable**'. It is estimated that only a few thousand spectacled bears remain, due to poaching and loss of habitat.

Did you know?

- ... the spectacled bear is so called because of the light markings around the eyes
- ... the 'spectacles' around the eyes can vary considerably. The faces of some spectacled bears are completely black, without even a trace of a marking.
- ... the spectacled bear is the only South American bear that builds a nest for sleeping in treetops.

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