



Bears in Mind - Fund for bears
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Brown bear (*Ursus arctos*)



The brown bear is the most well-known and widely distributed member of the bear family. The larger populations live primarily in Scandinavia, the Balkans, Eurasia, parts of Asia (Siberia) and North-America.

Origin

The brown bear belongs to the subfamily of real (great) bears and is thought to have evolved from the Etruscan bear (*Ursus etruscus*). This bear lived during the early Pleistocene period (about 2, 5 million years ago). They migrated from Europe to Eurasia and North America. There is evidence that the polar bear, the brown bear and the black bear all descend from the Etruscan bear.

Habitat

The brown bear occupies a variety of habitats such as dense forests, mountainous areas and the tundra.

Appearance

Despite the adjective 'brown' in the name, a brown bear's fur can differ in colour. The colour usually ranges from light cream to dark brown, but there are also a few light grey and blackish brown bears. The tips of the long hairs are usually white. Many older bears keep the light-coloured strip across the neck that is typical for young bears. Brown bears have very long claws on the forelimbs which, as is the case with all other bear species, are non-retractable.

Diet

The brown bear is an omnivore and feeds on a variety of vegetable products, like fruits, seaweed, grass, seeds, nuts, berries, roots and sprouts. They have a great liking for honey and other sweet foods. The brown bear also feeds on insects, fish, small mammals and carrion of bigger animals. In some areas the brown bear also hunts hoofed animals, like elk, reindeer and red deer.

Hibernation

Brown bears hibernate for a period of around 5 months each year. When winter approaches, they start looking for a den in a protected spot (an existing den or one that the bear digs especially).

Social behaviour

Brown bears are mostly solitary, stick to their habitat and have their own territory. Territories can occasionally overlap. The territory of an adult male usually covers the territory of multiple females, and occasionally overlaps even the territory of other adult males. Although they are mostly solitary, brown bears will remain with their mate for a few weeks during mating season. The female will stay with her

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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young until they are old enough to go their own way. Brown bears may gather at major food sources, for example during the salmon run.

<p>Size Male: 210 - 300 cm length, 90 – 150 cm height Female: 70 - 240 cm length, 70 – 120 cm height</p> <p>Sexual maturity Male: 4 – 5 years Female: appr. 3 years</p> <p>Number of litters Around 1 x per 2 years Total of 8 cubs.</p> <p>Lactation period 2 to 2,5 years</p>	<p>Weight 150 – 400 kg. The biggest subspecies, the Kodiak bear, can weigh up to 700 kg.</p> <p>Mating season Between May and August</p> <p>Number of cubs 1 to 4</p>	<p>Lifespan In captivity: 40-50 years In the wild: 25-30 years</p> <p>Gestation period 6 – 9 months</p> <p>Weight at birth 300 – 500 grams</p>
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Status

The European brown bear has already lost a large part of its original habitat. Other subspecies of the brown bear are often endangered. Worldwide the number of brown bears is estimated to be around 100,000. The **IUCN-status** of the brown bear is listed as '**Least Concern**', although in some areas the brown bear population is considered '**Vulnerable**'.

Did you know?

- ... 700 years ago the brown bear was even found in the Netherlands
- ... the brown bear is an excellent swimmer
- ... the brown bear is without a doubt the strongest animal in Europe.

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