



Bears in Mind - Fund for bears
Grebbeweg 111
Postbus 9, 3910 AA Rhenen
P.O. Box 9, NL-3910 AA Rhenen
The Netherlands
T. +31 (0)317 650 220
info@bearsinmind.org
www.bearsinmind.org

IBAN: NL26TRIO0254692664
BIC / SWIFT: TRIONL2U
KvK Utrecht: 411 86 102

Sloth bear (*Ursus ursinus*)



The sloth bear is found primarily in central and south India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Two subspecies have formed since the division of India and Sri Lanka.

Origin

The sloth bear used to be classified as its own genus, *Melursus*. Many taxonomic classifications however, now exclude this genus and classify the sloth bear in the genus *Ursus*. The sloth bear is a somewhat unusual species. It has a number of unique characteristics, such as the remarkable lips and claws, which distinguish them from other bear species. Since very few fossils have been found, little is known about its history. The sloth bear was supposedly 'spotted' for the first time about 1.6 million years ago.

Habitat

Sloth bears live primarily in extensive tropical, forested, sparsely populated, mountainous areas as well as on the tundra. They prefer a habitat that offers good shelter.

Appearance

Compared to other bears, the sloth bear differs substantially in appearance. They were quite often confused with the bear-like 'sloth', which is another animal. The sloth bear's most distinguishing feature is the snout: it is long and pale and has flexible lips that can be stretched out. They have an exceptionally long and flat tongue. The upper incisors are missing and the remaining teeth are usually in poor condition. This is the result of a specialized diet that mainly consists of ants and termites. The body of a sloth bear is short, round and plump; their short legs have large paws with long, curved claws. The sloth bear has long, black (very occasionally also rusty) shaggy hair, which parts on the head and hangs down on the sides. On the chest they have a white, horseshoe shaped mark. You will never forget a sloth bear, once you have seen one in a zoo or in the wild!

Diet

The sloth bear's diet consists mainly of termites, ants and fruits. The sloth bear has very large claws with which they can easily open termite and ant hills. They will then disperse dirt and earth from the hill with vigorous blows and suck up the hill's inhabitants with their tubular, extended tongue. They make so much noise in the process that it can be heard from 100 meters distance! The sloth bear can close off its nose completely. This is very practical as otherwise he would snort up ants and termites, as well as dust through its nose. This bear also likes to eat leaves, blossoms, fruits and beehives and will climb trees to reach these delicacies.

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.



www.BEARSinMIND.org



Bears in Mind - Fund for bears
 Grebbeweg 111
 Postbus 9, 3910 AA Rhenen
 P.O. Box 9, NL-3910 AA Rhenen
 The Netherlands
 T. +31 (0)317 650 220
 info@bearsinmind.org
 www.bearsinmind.org

IBAN: NL26TRIO0254692664
 BIC / SWIFT: TRIONL2U
 KvK Utrecht: 411 86 102

Hibernation

Just like the giant panda, the spectacled bear and the Malayan Sun bear, the sloth bear does not hibernate.

Social behaviour

The sloth bear is generally nocturnal; during the day they sleep in natural dens or holes they have burrowed themselves, especially along rivers or in ravines. In spite of their rather awkward way of climbing, they enjoy going up trees to find food. Unlike most other bears, the sloth bear seem to enjoy the company of other sloth bears.

Size 140 - 190 cm length 60 – 90 cm height	Weight 70 – 140 kg.	Lifespan In captivity: 40 years In the wild: 30 – 35 years
Sexual maturity Female: 2 - 3 years	Mating season April - June	Gestation period Around 210 days
Number of litters Around 1 x per 2-3 years	Number of cubs 1 to 3	Weight at birth unknown
Lactation period 24 - 36 months		

Status

Since the middle of last century, the number of sloth bears has declined rapidly. Poaching for their gall bladder and other parts of the body, as well as loss of habitat are the main reasons for this decline. The entire habitat of the sloth bear is under threat, both in Sri Lanka and in India. India is possibly the cradle of the dancing bear. In the past, gypsies trained sloth bears to become dancing bears. This custom spread from India to the Middle East and Europe. There are currently many hundreds of dancing bears; they are particularly used to entertain the many tourists that visit India and its monumental treasures. Recently, a number of shelters were opened in the south of India and more than 450 dancing bears have been taken off the streets since. Alertis provides support to an organization in India that has set up an extensive information campaign on dancing bears. Even though there are so many problem bears, the sloth bear is seldom found in zoos outside of India. There are only 9 bears listed in the European studbook for sloth bears and therefore overpopulation and birth restrictions are not an issue for zoos. Globally, zoos are starting to show more interest in the sloth bear. The Indian nature and animal conservationists, zoos and authorities will hopefully be able to draw more attention to the fate of the sloth bear and thus prevent further abuse and exploitation. These same groups must take steps to protect the species and its habitat. The sloth bear is an important inhabitant of the forests of central and south India as well as Sri Lanka. Protection is necessary otherwise the sloth bear will very soon become extinct, just like in south China. The **IUCN-status** of the sloth bear is '**Vulnerable**'.

Did you know?

- ... the sloth bear is so called because of its prominent lips
- ... the sloth bear is also called 'bhalu' in India
- ... and not surprisingly, bear 'Baloo' from the Jungle book is a ... sloth bear

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.



www.BEARSinMIND.org