

Meet the bears

There are eight different species of bear living in the world.

We bears don't all live in one place. We just got together today to help make this book.



Sloth bear

Brown bear
(there are quite a few different types of brown bear)

Giant panda
(I'm a bear too!)

American black bear
(I live in North America)

Spectacled bear

Polar bear

Asiatic black bear
(I live in Asia)

Sun bear

American black bears *Ursus americanus*

American black bears live in North America. With a population of around 850,000, they are the most common species of bear on the planet.

There are at least 16 different subspecies of American black bear. Most are black in colour, like this one...



...but others are not black at all. Like these:



GLACIER BEAR

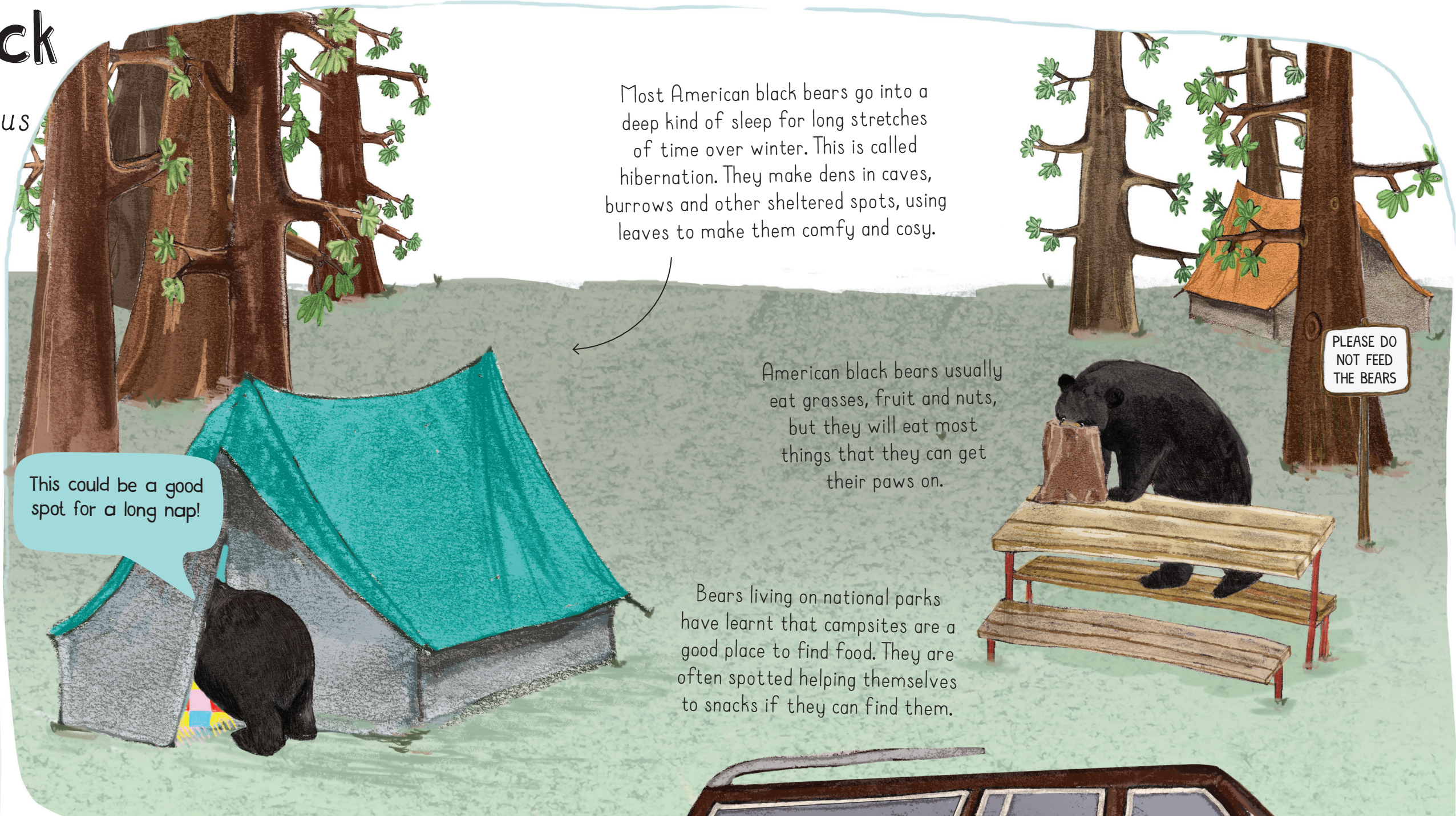
Ursus americanus emmonsii

Sometimes called the blue bear because of their grey or silvery-blue fur, these bears are extremely rare and only live in Alaska.

KERMODE BEAR

Ursus americanus kermodei

Kermode bears look like small polar bears, but they are actually a rare, creamy-coloured subspecies of American black bear. Sometimes called spirit bears, they live in British Columbia, Canada.



Most American black bears go into a deep kind of sleep for long stretches of time over winter. This is called hibernation. They make dens in caves, burrows and other sheltered spots, using leaves to make them comfy and cosy.

American black bears usually eat grasses, fruit and nuts, but they will eat most things that they can get their paws on.

Bears living on national parks have learnt that campsites are a good place to find food. They are often spotted helping themselves to snacks if they can find them.

This could be a good spot for a long nap!

PLEASE DO NOT FEED THE BEARS

HOW DO THEY SIZE UP?

American black bears can reach 2 metres tall and weigh more than 250 kilograms. They are the third biggest species of bear, coming in behind the polar bear and the brown bear.



Sun bears

Helarctos malayanus

There are fewer than 10,000 sun bears in the world, and they live in the tropical rainforests of Southeast Asia.

Sun bears have short fur so that they can stay cool in hot weather and they have long, curved claws that are perfect for sticking into tight spots to reach honey and other tasty food.

Their super-long tongues help them to extract honey from beehives. This special skill, and their love of honey, has given them the nickname of the honey bear.



Sun bears get their more common name from the sun-shaped, yellow marking on their chests.



Sun bears are a shy species of bear and they like to spend their time hidden away in trees eating honey.

Their small size (which is great for climbing) and their long tongues mean they're perfectly suited for this pastime.

If you don't want to climb a tree, you can pick up a jar of honey in the supermarket.

Or you can become a beekeeper and make your own!



HOW DO THEY SIZE UP?

At around 1.4 metres tall, sun bears are the world's smallest species of bear. They weigh up to 80 kilograms. That's less than half as heavy as an American black bear.



Giant pandas *Ailuropoda melanoleuca*

Giant pandas are bears too! They live in cold, wet bamboo forests in the mountains of central China. Today there are probably fewer than 2,000 left in the wild. They are the rarest of all the bears.

Their famous black and white fur makes giant pandas easy to recognize.



There is a subspecies of the giant panda called the Qinling panda. It is smaller than the giant panda and it has brown and white fur, rather than black and white.

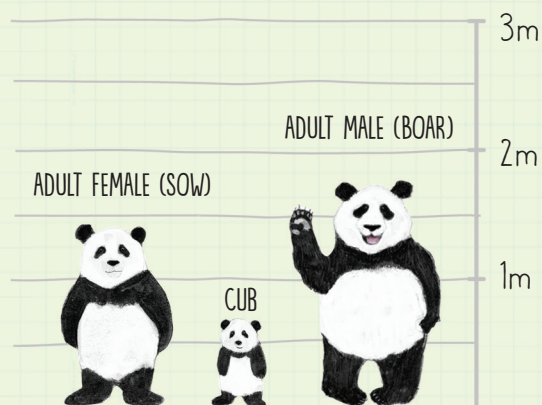


The red panda and the giant panda both have a big appetite for bamboo, but they do not belong to the same family. The red panda is more closely related to raccoons than to bears.



HOW DO THEY SIZE UP?

One of the smaller bear species, giant pandas grow to around 1.8 metres. A big male can weigh more than 120 kilograms, about half the weight of a big American black bear.



Giant pandas love to eat bamboo. They live in thick bamboo forests so that they can be surrounded by their favourite food.

At least 12 hours of a giant panda's day are spent chewing on bamboo stems.



We like to do other things too, like playing hide-and-seek!

Spectacled bears *Tremarctos ornatus*

Spectacled bears are the only bears that are native to South America. There are fewer than 20,000 of these bears in the wild.

They mainly live in the Andes Mountains, which is why they are often known as the Andean bear.

The spectacled bear is the only short-faced bear living today. The other seven species of bear have longer noses.



THEIR SNOUT IS QUITE FLAT

Between 500,000 and 2 million years ago, an ancestor of today's spectacled bear roamed the planet. The giant short-faced bear (*Arctotherium angustidens*) stood at a whopping 3.3 metres tall!

CAN YOU NAME A FAMOUS BEAR FROM SOUTH AMERICA?



Spectacled bears get their name from the spectacle-shaped markings around their eyes.



Not because we wear specs for reading...



...or to look cool

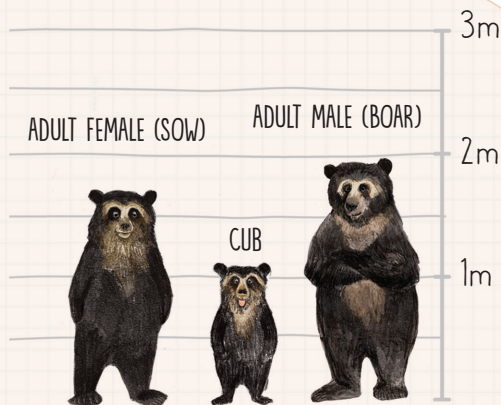


...or for disguise!



HOW DO THEY SIZE UP?

Spectacled bears can reach 2 metres in height. Adult males weigh up to 200 kilograms, which is roughly twice as heavy as the females.



Polar bears

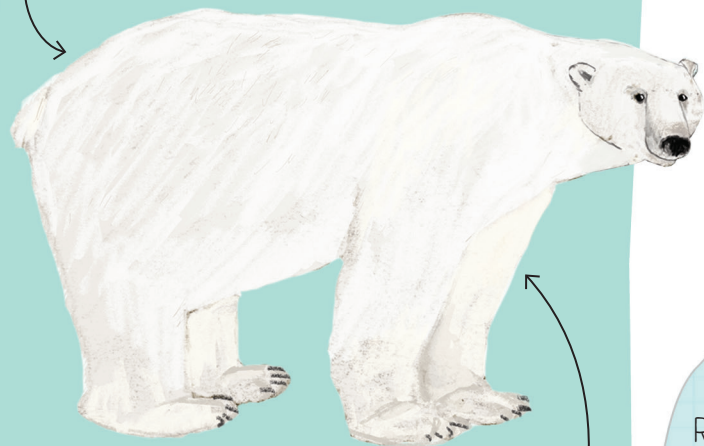
Ursus maritimus

Polar bears live in the Arctic, a cold, icy place that surrounds the North Pole. There are around 20,000 polar bears in the wild and they are mostly found in parts of Canada, Greenland, Russia, Norway and Alaska in the USA.

Polar bears are amazingly well adapted to their chilly surroundings.

Thick white fur for staying warm and for blending in with their snowy environment. This helps the bears get close to their prey without being seen.

Incredible sense of smell for tracking prey over long distances.



Very large feet (up to 30 centimetres wide!) for walking on snow and ice, and for speedy swimming. Their feet even have fur on the bottom to keep out the cold and their paw pads are covered in small bumps to give them extra grip.

Underneath their fur, polar bears actually have black skin. This absorbs sunlight and keeps them feeling warm and cosy.

Polar bears love to eat seals and, unfortunately for the seals, they are very good at catching them. The bears wait by the edge of the water, or above holes in the ice, and then pounce when a seal appears.

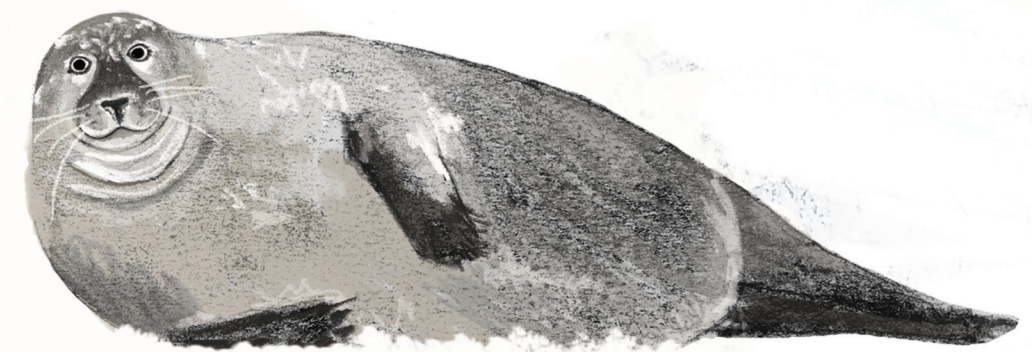
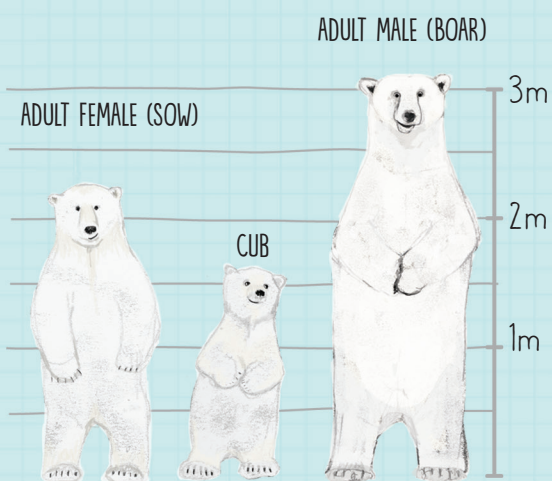


They are very patient animals and can wait for hours and hours at a time.

Polar bears are great at sneaking up on their prey. Their long necks also give them a good view above the water while they swim.

HOW DO THEY SIZE UP?

Reaching a great height of over 3 metres and weighing up to 700 kilograms, polar bears are not only the biggest of all of the bear species, but they're also the largest meat-eating animal on land. An adult male polar bear can weigh up to ten times as much as a sun bear!



Eating

One thing that all bears have in common is their love of food.

Bears find food in all sorts of places and what they eat depends on where they live, what time of year it is and what they can get their paws on. But most bears have a favourite dish...

Panda bears just love bamboo – they can eat for hours on end and they never get bored of it.

Sun bears prefer all things honey-flavoured, including honeycomb, bees and, best of all, honey itself.

Sloth bears like a range of different foods, including fruit, insects and eggs, but their real favourite is lots and lots of termites.

Brown bears are particularly fond of salmon and berries. But not necessarily at the same time.

American black bears like to eat grasses, berries and nuts.

Polar bears have a taste for seals. Don't tell the seals!

Spectacled bears love wild fruit and nuts. In zoos, they are especially keen on oranges.

Asiatic black bears also like fruit, and a side plate of insects is always a bonus!



Running

Bears don't often run a long way. They usually save running for when they are trying to get away from predators or they want to scare another animal.

But when they do run, some can be extremely fast!

Over short distances, the brown bear and the American black bear are both super speedy. They can run much faster than a human.



BROWN BEAR

AMERICAN BLACK BEAR

SPECTACLED BEAR

GIANT PANDA

POLAR BEAR

SUN BEAR

ASIATIC BLACK BEAR

SLOTH BEAR



The giant panda and the sloth bear are reluctant runners. They'd usually rather take their time and walk instead!

