

# AMERICAN BLACK BEAR

My name might steer you in the wrong direction, because some American black bears have a light-brown, blue-gray, or even beige color. This often depends on the area where we live. But we're all fast and smooth climbers.



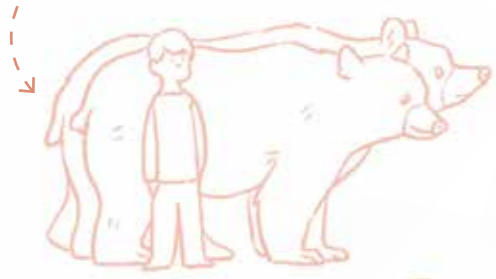


# Who am I?

**Name:** American black bear  
**Class:** mammals

## Size:

males 5 to 6 feet (1.50 to 1.80 meters) long; females 4 to 5 feet (1.20 to 1.60 meters) long



ears with not much hair

## Climber:

The American black bear climbs quickly and skillfully with its four legs.

42 **teeth**, including 4 **sharp canines** and 12 **incisors**

small head but **strong neck**

## Legs:

4 legs, each with 5 toes and sharp claws that are nonretractable

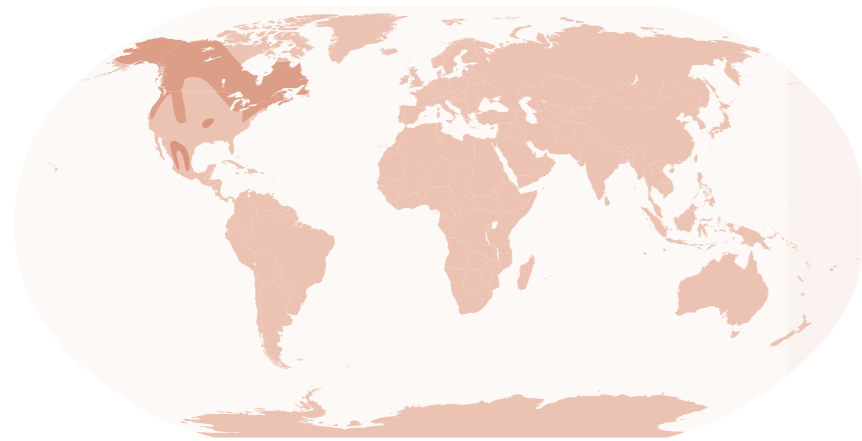
**inconspicuous tail** of 3 to 6 inches (8 to 14 centimeters) in length

## Food:

omnivore: grasses, plants, twigs, fruit, nuts, honey, insects, fish, small mammals, eggs, food from garbage cans

## Habitat:

dense bushes and wooded areas; in the mountains and swamps of North America



## Speed:

I can reach a top speed of 25 miles (40 kilometers) per hour.



## Enemies:



humans

Cubs are attacked by:



cougars



wolves



grizzly bears



other black bears

I'm a whole lot **smaller than the grizzly bear**. That one has a **hump** on its back and **longer claws** than mine.

I usually stay **away from people**, because I'm shy. But if I smell **food** in a bag or a garbage can, I'll look for it anyway. I have a very **good nose**. Sometimes I stand **on my hind legs** to catch **smells** or to **reach** something.

During the **summer** and the **fall**, I **eat a lot** so that I have enough fat to **get through the winter**. When it gets colder, I go into a state of **dormancy** called torpor. I look for a **sheltered place** in a cave, in the undergrowth, under the ground, or even in a tree. My **body temperature drops** and I don't need to eat or drink, but I **don't hibernate**. If there's danger, I wake up immediately.

I prefer to live **alone**, **except** in the summer **during the mating season**. The **tiny bears** in my belly don't start to **grow** until I go into **torpor**. In **January or February**, I give birth to **2 to 3 cubs**. I keep them **with me** for about **a year and a half**.

