

American Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*)



Taxonomy:

Family Ursidae. There are currently 18 recognized subspecies, including *Ursus americanus cinnamomum* which occurs in northern Utah.

Description:

The American black bear is the smallest of the North American bears. Its coloration varies widely with locality: the most common being black with a brown muzzle, but light brown and cinnamon are common and specific subspecies are known to be a pale bluish gray or even cream colored. They can be distinguished from *Ursus arctos* by their longer, tapered, less furry ears, a convex, rather than concave, face profile, and the lack of a large shoulder hump.

Length of head and body: 1,400-2,000 mm (males) 1,200-1,600 mm (females); Length of tail: 80-140 mm; Weight: 47-409 kg (males) 39-236 kg (females)



Distribution:

Ranges south from Alaska, transcontinental across Canada and continuing south through the Rocky Mountains into Northern Mexico. They are also found in the Pacific Northwest down into California, as well as populations in the Appalachians, Louisiana, and Florida. Locally common in the mountains of the Wasatch Front.

Ecology and Diet:

Black bears are omnivorous: their diet consists of some small mammals and insects but is comprised mostly of fruits, nuts and vegetation. If food is abundant and in a central location bears will congregate and social hierarchies form, but usually

food is spread out and sparse so black bears tend to be solitary. They are active during the daytime but some have developed nocturnal habits in areas with a large human presence. Hibernation begins in the late fall but in the more southern, warmer parts of their range only pregnant females hibernate.

Life History:

Mating occurs in early summer but the fertilized egg does not implant until November. Females give birth to usually 2-3 cubs every other year during hibernation. The cubs stay with their mother for 17 months until she forces them away in order to breed again. Females reproduce in their 2-9th year depending on the availability of food whereas males reach sexual maturity in 3-4 years.

Reference: Rogers 1999.