

Greatland Jr. Ranger Exclusive Bear Edition



Alaska Youth Stewardship for National Parks No. 3

You Could Be A Junior Ranger!



Can you become a Junior Ranger? Yes, you can, if you are interested in learning about our amazing places and unbelievable heritage! Get ready for a great time!

Do Greatland Junior Rangers have to spend a lot of time in a national park? No, although it would be great if you could, you can be a Greatland Junior Ranger without even visiting a national park. You can help protect our parks by treating the environment you live in with care. Your local parks, and even your own backyard, will be a better place if you become a steward. A steward is someone who takes care of things that are important to them. Greatland Junior Rangers learn about the wildlife that lives in our great parks and country. In this issue, you'll learn all about bears! The great thing about Alaska is that

it is home to all three species of bears that exist in northern America. All the way up north in the arctic regions of Alaska is where the polar bears live. They roam the pack ice and tundra. The brown/grizzly bears live from the far reaches of the arctic all the way down to southeast Alaska. You can find black bears in most of Alaska's forests.

Living in Alaska gives you a pretty good chance of seeing a bear for yourself. Even if you never run into a bear in the wild, you can always be sure they are close. Alaska is right in the heart of bear country!

All Greatland Junior Rangers will receive a ranger badge and membership certificate. What are you waiting for? Read on and become a Greatland Junior Ranger today!

The Who's Who of Bears!

Black Bears

Black bears are the little guys compared to their cousins, the brown bear and the polar bear. They normally weigh less than 300 pounds and are less than 5½ feet long.

Black bears love to climb trees. Whenever they are in trouble they climb a tree to escape. They have short claws that are perfect for climbing tree trunks. They stay close to trees for safety and rarely leave the forest.

Like most bears that live in cold areas, black bears spend the fall getting ready for a long winter in the den. They eat lots of food and build up a fat layer to survive the winter. When the snow comes, bears find or make a den which can be a cave or hole in the ground to rest for the winter. This is called hibernation. Black bears range throughout most of North American forests including national parks.

Brown Bears

Brown bears come in many different sizes. They can be barely larger than a black bear all the way to 1,000 pounds!

Brown bears like to live in the forests much like the black bears. These bears are not as timid as the black bears and will wander out into open fields and

meadows. One kind of brown bear, the grizzly bear, is found only in North America.

Brown bears have a large hump of fat and muscle over their shoulders. They have small ears and long thick fur with a dish shaped face. The farther you head inland, the smaller the brown bears tend to be due to the lack of salmon.

Polar Bears

Polar bears are the best hunters of all the bears. They live in the arctic region to the north. Polar bears have to be great hunters to survive since there is little vegetation available to eat. The favorite food of polar bears is a seal. Since the bears prefer seals, which don't

migrate, the polar bears remain in their home range for a long time.

The way polar bears stay so warm in the extreme cold of the arctic is by having a thick layer of fat, called blubber, under their skin for insulation. Thick hair grows on the bottom of their feet to help keep them from getting cold feet



Photo by Terry D. DeBruyn

Remember these six basic safety rules

1. Never feed bears.
2. Don't camp on a bear trail.
3. Keep a clean camp.
4. Never get too close to a bear.
5. Keep away from a bear's food cache.
6. Never surprise a bear.

Hot off the Press!

Camping in bear country

Learn how to camp in the backcountry safely with bears. Page 2

What if I run into a bear in the woods?

What to do and what to watch out for during those close encounters of the hairy kind. Page 3

Interview with a National Park Service Biologist.

Meet our own bear biologist Terry D. DeBruyn who gets to spend every day learning about bears. Pages 2-3

Learn about
national parks
online at:
www.nps.gov



Interview With a National Park Service Wildlife Biologist

Terry D. DeBruyn is a Regional Wildlife Biologist for the Alaska Region. He provides technical assistance to Alaska's national parks on wildlife issues and has been with the National Park Service for six years. He has studied bears in Florida, Michigan, Minnesota, Alaska, and Canada.

Q. Have you always wanted to be a bear biologist?

A. I always wanted to be outdoors as much as possible and working with wildlife. I had an interest in bears as a five-year old.

Q. What do I have to do to become a Bear Biologist?

A. Well, I went to school for twenty-three years to get to do what I do, but you may be able to find some bear-related work with a college degree. The time to start is now though—get good grades in school and spend as much time outdoors learning about wildlife as you can. Go bird watching with your parents and volunteer to help out with conservation groups.

Q. What's your favorite fact about bears?

A. How tiny cubs are when they are born—they are only about 1/500th of their mother's weight, while most other baby mammals are about 1/10th–1/30th of their mother's weight. So bear cubs are 15 to 25 times smaller than you might expect—why is that?

Q. Is there a time of year when you are more likely to see bears?

A. In the spring, when they move to coastal meadow areas to forage on herbs, they are visible along the coasts. In summer they congregate along streams to eat salmon.

Q. Are bear attacks common?

A. No, not really. In fact, bear attacks are fairly uncommon because bears want to avoid people as much or more than people want to avoid bears.

Q. Is relocating a habituated or nuisance bear very successful?

A. Generally not and that's why it's not done much anymore—people found out that bears are able to navigate back to their home range from hundreds of miles away—so you have to take them really far away and that costs lots of money and drugging and transporting bears can be dangerous to bears and people.

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Camping in Bear Country

Keep the food out of the bear's mouth •

Use a special bear resistant food container to store your food. Bear resistant food containers are designed so bears can't get into them and acquire a taste for human food. Bear resistant food containers are available in many outdoor stores and required equipment for most national parks.

Keep a clean camp •

Don't leave food or garbage unattended. If possible, keep food in a bear resistant food container. If you leave camp, make sure not to leave anything out that might attract a bear.

Cook where you can see • This makes sure you can see a bear before it's too close.

Make a plan for what you are going to do if a bear comes along for a visit while you're cooking. Keep track of the wind direction. Bears may be more likely to approach from downwind.

Don't cook smelly foods • A nice juicy steak smells as good to a bear as it does to us.

Bears have an amazing sense of smell and

will travel great distances for a good meal. Not only are bears attracted to smells they come across, they are actually using their noses to seek those smells out.

Don't sleep where you eat and cook •

Make sure to prepare your food and eat at least 100 yards from where you plan on sleeping. All of the food should be stored away from camp. Personal stuff like toothpaste, deodorant, and cooking fuel should be stored with the food as well.

Don't fish around bears • Never fish near a bear; it could become attracted to the fish splashing on the end of your line. If the bear does go after your line, cut it loose.

Bears can learn that a fisherman means an easy meal. Discard your fish guts into fast moving or deep water. Keep your cleaned fish in a sealed plastic bag near you. Don't leave cleaned fish unattended. If a bear likes your fishing spot, find another spot or hang out and do some bear watching from a good distance.

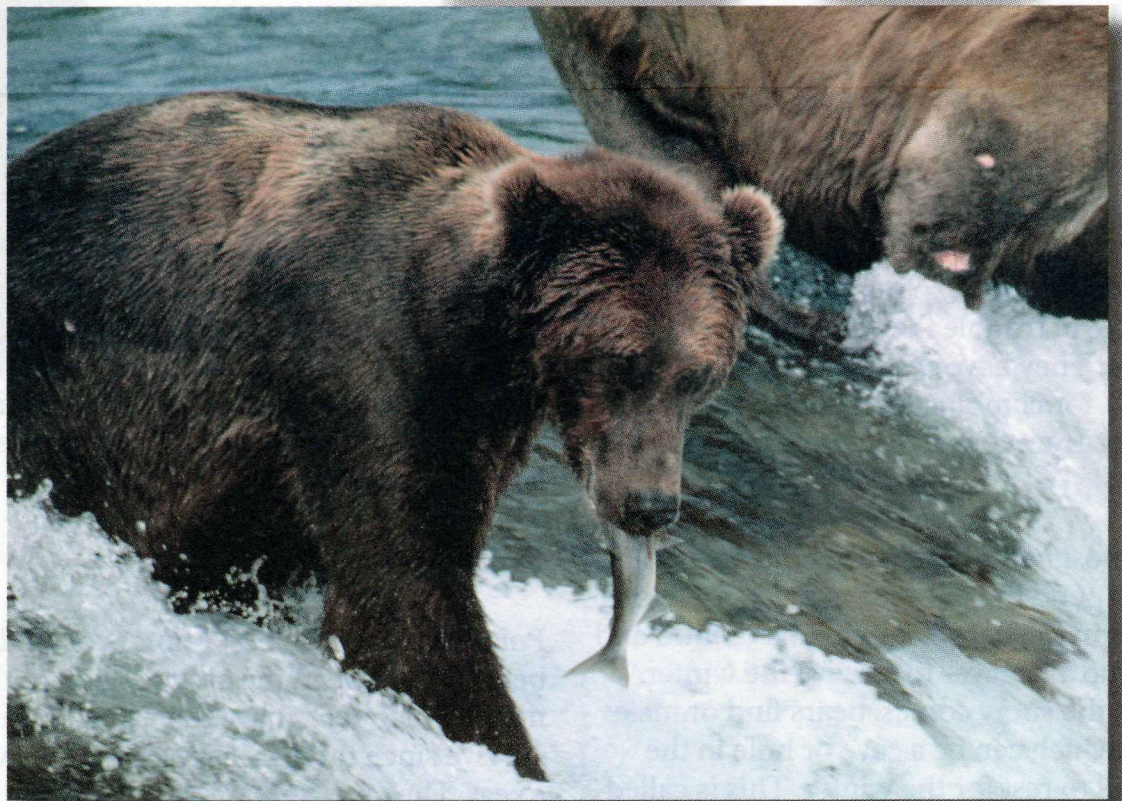
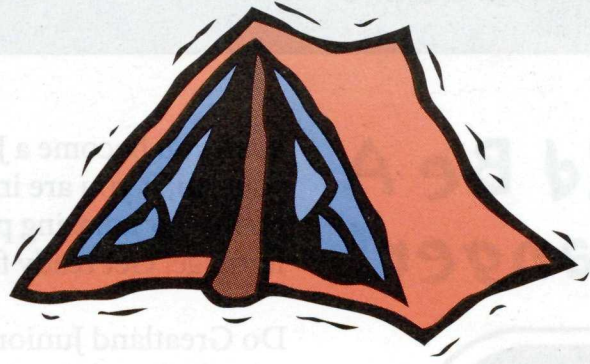


Photo by Terry D. DeBruyn

There's Something fishy going on!

What is it about salmon that makes bears love them so much? Bears eat many different foods such as grasses, sedges, bulbs, roots and berries. They also eat fish, small mammals, and insects such as ants. In some areas they have become significant predators of large hoofed mammals such as moose, caribou, and elk. But one food bears can agree on is salmon!

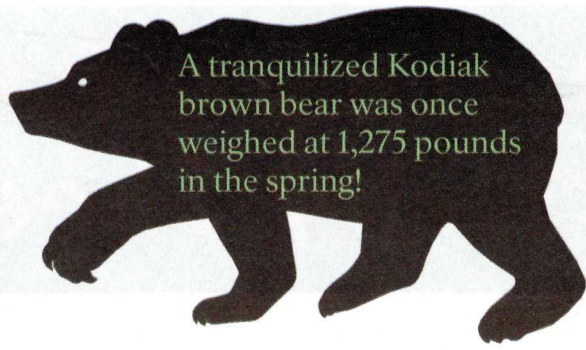
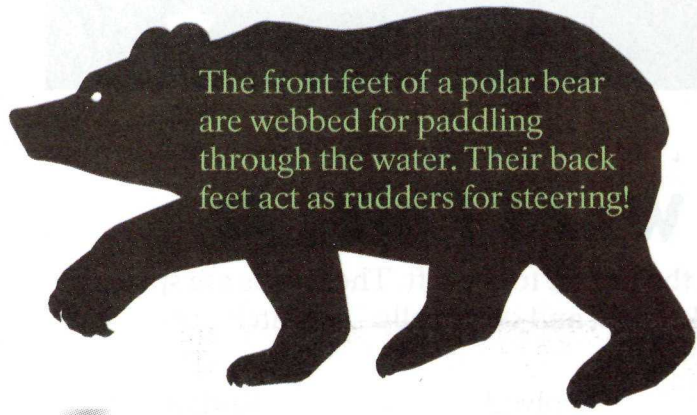
Katmai National Park is a great example of how bears come together. Brown bear and salmon are very active in Katmai.

The number of brown bears has grown to more than 2,000. During the peak of the world's largest sockeye salmon run each

July, and during return of the "spawned out" salmon in September, forty to sixty bears congregate in Brooks Camp along the Brooks River and the Naknek Lake and Brooks Lake shorelines.

Bears that have a healthy diet of salmon will grow bigger and healthier because salmon are so nutritious. Salmon are born and head out to sea for 2 to 3 years. Then they come back to the very same stream they were born in to spawn. The bears know this and return to the very same streams just like you know to return to your kitchen for dinner. Once there, the bears eat up and gain fat for the coming months.

Bear Fun Facts



What if I run into a bear in the woods?

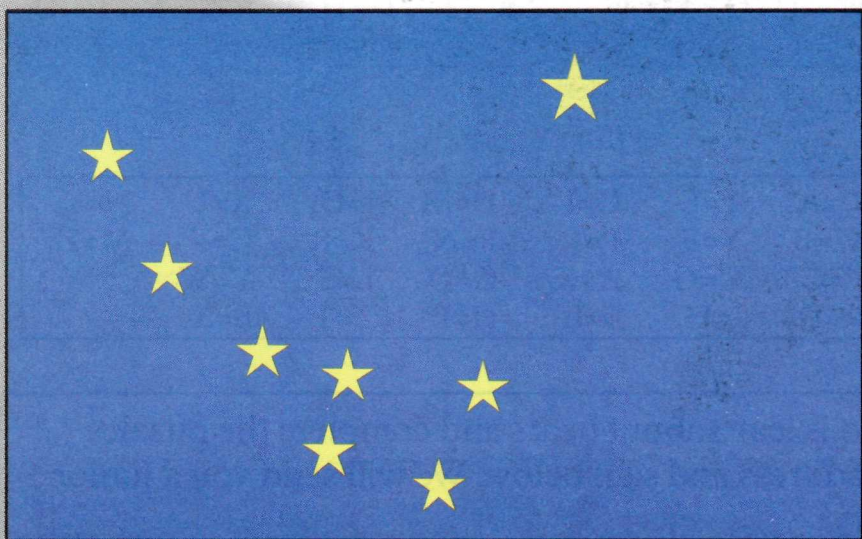
If you see a bear, avoid it if you can. Give the bear every opportunity to avoid you. If you do encounter a bear at close distance, remain calm. Attacks are rare. Chances are, you are not in danger. Most bears are interested only in protecting food, cubs, or their "personal space." Once the threat is removed, they will move on. Remember the following:

Identify Yourself • Let the bear know you are human. Talk to the bear in a normal voice. Wave your arms in the air slowly. This will help the bear recognize you as human. If a bear cannot tell what you are, it may come closer or stand on its hind legs to get a better look or smell. A standing bear is usually curious, not threatening. You may try to back away slowly diagonally, but if the bear follows, stop and hold your ground.

Don't Run • You can't outrun a bear. Bears can run down moose, elk, deer, and like dogs, they will chase fleeing animals. Bears

often make charges, sometimes to within 10 feet of their adversary, without making contact. Continue waving your arms and talking to the bear. If the bear gets too close, raise your voice and be more aggressive. Bang pots and pans. Use noisemakers or bear spray. Never imitate bear sounds or make a high-pitched squeal.

If Attacked • If it is a brown bear and is defending its cubs or food, play dead: Lie face down with your hands clasped behind your neck and legs spread apart so the bear can't turn you over. Do not move until the bear leaves the area. If the attack is prolonged and the brown bear begins to feed on you, fight back vigorously! The encounter has now likely changed from a defensive one to a predatory one. If it is a black bear, do not play dead: Fight back vigorously! Never play dead with a black bear! Most black bear attacks are predatory. Fight any bear that attempts to enter your tent!

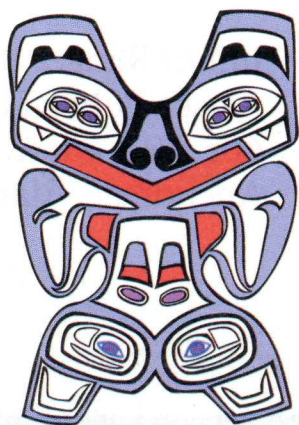


The Alaska Flag

The constellation Ursa Major (Great Bear) contains the famous group of stars on the Alaska flag known as the Big Dipper. The handle of the dipper is the Great Bear's tail and the dipper's cup is the bear's flank.

The future of bears is up to us

We as humans have been a large factor in determining the survival or loss of bears. We need your help as a Junior Ranger to make sure that bears are around for years to come. Make sure to do your part by learning about bears and how to help them. The natives who first lived in North America saw that black bears were similar to humans in many ways. Bears could stand up on their back feet like us. They made tracks very similar to humans and ate some of the very same foods the natives had.



Bears seem very similar to us. Some of the early natives also believed that bears could lead them to the meaning of life. It is this respect for bears that we all need to have to help them survive. What can I do? I'm only a kid you say? There are lots of things you can do. Help other people learn about bears. Develop good bear practices when traveling in bear country. Keep an interest in bears and let people know you care. Your stewardship is key to helping the bears. Keep up the good work!

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Q. What do you think is the biggest problem between human and bear interaction?

A. I think if people would learn to respect and understand them more there would be far less conflict between the species.

Q. Why do bears hibernate?

A. Hibernation is an adaptation to lack of food. Think about it—it wouldn't make much sense to be out there looking for something to eat when it would take more energy to locate it than the bear could gain from eating it. Polar bears are different and male bears stay active in winter because they can kill seals and acquire energy that way. Only female polar bears den—to give birth.

Q. How long do cubs live with their mother?

A. Male black bears cubs generally leave their mother's home range at about 18 months. Female black bears normally stay in their mother's ranges. Brown bear and polar bear cubs may remain with their mothers for 42 months.

Q. When are bear cubs born?

A. Most female bears locate a den of some sort in October or November and cubs are born in the den usually in December or January.

Q. How old do bears get?

A. In the wild, if a black bear does all the right things year after year, its life expectancy is 20–25 years, but for most bears life is much shorter—although in New York a wild black bear survived for over 42 years. The oldest Alaska black bears are known from harvest records and are a 30 year-old male and a 28 year-old female. The oldest brown bear in Alaska lived 34 years.

Q. Is it true that bears really like honey?

A. Most people think bears will eat anything, but bears actually have preferences for the foods they eat. They like meat, fish, and berries, but they like honey too and will eat it when it's available. In Florida, some black bears go through 3 strands of electrified barbed-wire fence to get at the honey in beehives.

Q. How far does a bear travel?

A. What determines how far a bear travels is how large an area it has to occupy to meet its life requirements such as food, cover, mates, and den sites. That is mainly determined by the availability of nutritious foods. Black bears, in good habitat, can meet their needs in about 10-15 square miles. But some polar bears have home ranges that are over 100,000 square miles in area—they need to travel farther to get what they need.

Q. How do polar bears stay warm in the Arctic?

A. Polar bears are almost completely furred except their noses and pads of their feet. Their fur has long, oily water repellent guard hairs and dense underfur which increases in autumn. But it is fat that protects polar bears from the cold. Polar bears have a thick layer of blubber (4.3 inches) covering most of their body (think about it—when you swim a lot to make a living—fur would get wet and lose its insulating properties (water conducts heat 25 times faster than air)—so it's fat that helps polar bears stay warm.



Greatland Jr. Ranger Activity Sheet



P F O R A G I N G L K O G F F E B E G S
R J I O A D A P T E D G N W O R B C C E
E L A I B E R R I E S N E L P D P Q P A
D H K A I A H Q G X H S F I S H I N G L
A K C P O R B H Y O A C B J A F A P L S
T P A R L C Y N A R F E L M K I W G A V
O I L S O M N I V E R O U S O T F L C K
R S B T G C O O L A E U F B D A J P I S
T U U K I C M L K M S D F A I M S E E O
C L A W S J L D B V C H C W A N L N R P
I Z S Y T S A B R B Z O H E K O A D I U
B S S R D V S A R U M M A S Q B M A S E
C D E N A D L T U T S E R O F W M N R T
G H N O H O Y L Z Z I R G M X B A G T A
R G R L P R E T B R D A E E V K M E A N
A H E R B O A R E V E N S A O B W R P R
S H D J T U T T J G F G V E B A D E S E
S L L F M S T W N L W E R C P N I D E B
E M I W X I V E V O L V E D U M D M O I
S O W A L A S K A V U N T T A T I B A H

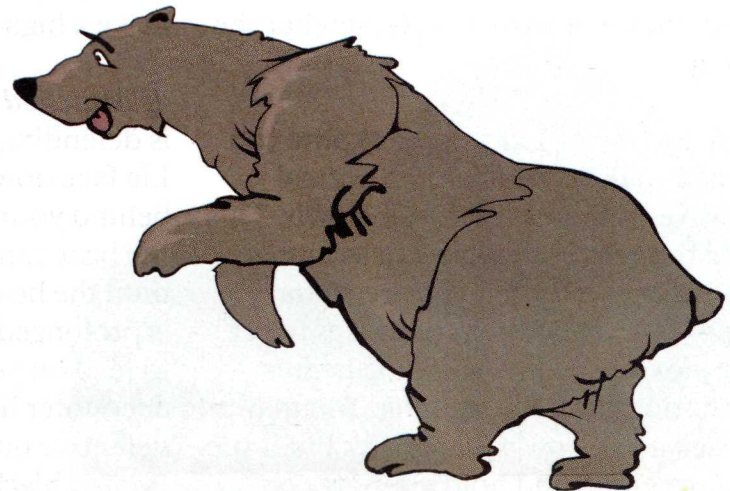


Word Find



Find the words in the puzzle to the left. The words are spelled out forwards, backwards, and diagonally - so watch out!

- | | | |
|--------------|------------|------------|
| Adapted | Evolved | Kodiak |
| Alaska | Fishing | Litter |
| Berries | Floe | Mammals |
| Biologist | Foraging | Omnivorous |
| Black | Forest | Paw |
| Bluff Charge | Furry | Polar |
| Boar | Glacier | Salmon |
| Brown | Grasses | Seals |
| Claws | Grizzly | Predator |
| Cubs | Habitat | Sow |
| Den | Hibernate | Tundra |
| Endangered | Home Range | Wilderness |



Who Does What?

Match the mammals on the left to the facts on the right.

- | | |
|-------------|--|
| Humans | I am the best swimmer out of the bunch. |
| Black Bears | I love to eat pizza |
| Brown Bears | I have a pronounced hump between my shoulders. |
| Polar Bears | I have short curved claws for climbing trees. |

What did He Say?

Use the secret decoder to figure out the phrase.

R G F Z Y T T R Z P T
D _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
W T Q K L A T T H Z I T D
_ _ _ _ _ , _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _
V O S R
_ _ _ _ _ !

Q=A	T=E	O=I	D=M	J=Q	X=U	N=Y
W=B	Y=F	P=J	F=N	K=R	C=V	M=Z
E=C	U=G	A=K	G=O	L=S	V=W	
R=D	I=H	S=L	H=P	Z=T	B=X	

Do you want to be a Greatland Junior Ranger? All you need to do is learn about bears and complete the puzzles and games on this sheet. When you finish, fill in your name and address and sign below. We will send you a Junior Ranger Certificate. Good luck and have fun!

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Address (So we can mail you your badge and certificate):
Address: _____

City/ State: _____

Zip Code: _____

Mail or drop off this insert to the:

Junior Ranger Program
Alaska Public Lands Information Center
605 West 4th Avenue, Suite 105
Anchorage, Alaska 99501