MEET THEM AT PLUMPTON PARK ZOO

# AMERICAN BLACK BEAR

*Ursus americanus*

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## Fast facts

| | |
|---|---|
| ANIMAL GROUP | Mammal (bear family, Ursidae) |
| NATIVE REGION | North America only |
| HABITAT | Forests with thick ground plants, fruits and nuts |
| DIET | Omnivore: plants, berries, nuts, insects, honey, small animals |
| LENGTH | 5 to 6.5 feet |
| WEIGHT | 300 to 600 lb |
| TOP SPEED | Up to 30 mph in short bursts |
| LIFESPAN | Around 10 years on average; sometimes over 30 |
| STATUS | Least Concern |
| OUR BEAR | Louie |



Photo: Plumpton Park Zoo

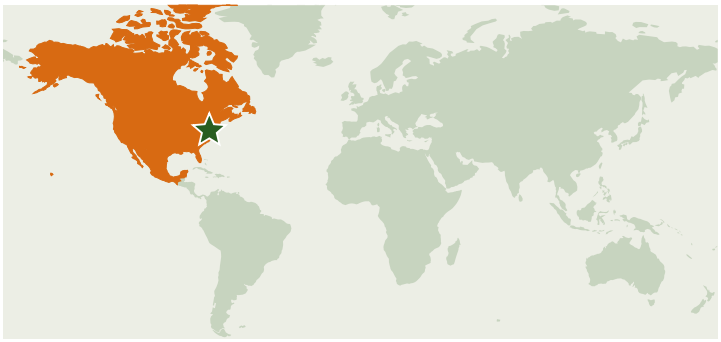
## Did you know?

- The American black bear is the smallest of the three bear species in North America.
- Black bears are not always black. They can be brown, cinnamon, blond, or even white or bluish gray.
- A newborn cub weighs only 8 to 12 ounces.
- Black bears do not hibernate the way ground squirrels do. Their body temperature drops only a few degrees, and they can wake up.
- A video of Louie enjoying his daily shower has been watched more than a million times.

## Words to know

**Omnivore:** An animal that eats both plants and meat.
**Dormancy:** A deep winter rest, lighter than true hibernation.
**Delayed implantation:** When a pregnancy waits months before it starts to grow.
**Solitary:** Living alone instead of in a group.

## Where it lives in the wild



Lives in the wild ★ Plumpton Park Zoo, Rising Sun, MD

## Think about it

1. Why is the name “black bear” only partly true?
2. How can you tell a black bear from a brown bear without looking at its color?
3. What helps black bears climb trees so well?
4. Which four Maryland counties do black bears use year-round?
5. Why is it important to keep trash and pet food away from bears?

## Draw it

Draw a black bear climbing a tree. Label its short curved claws, its brown muzzle, its tall oval ears, and its level shoulders (no hump).

**STANDARDS · GRADES K–4** **WRITTEN FOR GRADES 3–5**

Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 3-LS3-1 · K-ESS3-3**
Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.3.C · 3.3.K.E**

*Draw here*

**Learn more:** plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/american-black-bear/ · **Sources:** Maryland Department of Natural Resources; IUCN Red List; Plumpton Park Zoo records.
**Supports Maryland and Delaware (NGSS) and Pennsylvania (STEELS) standards:** 4-LS1-1 (3.1.4.A) · 3-LS3-1 (3.1.3.C) · K-ESS3-3 (3.3.K.E)
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# AMERICAN BLACK BEAR

*Before and after your visit*

Page 2 of the American black bear fact sheet · © 2026 Plumpton Park Zoological Gardens Inc.
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## Before you visit · 5 minutes

Name: _____ Date: _____

**1. Predict: where in the wild does the American black bear live?**

Circle one (or more if it lives on more than one):

Africa | Asia | Australia | Europe | North America | South America

**2. Predict: what does it eat?**

☐ plants ☐ other animals ☐ both

**3. Word hunt: find these words on page 1. Put a check by each one you already know.**

☐ Omnivore ☐ Dormancy ☐ Delayed implantation ☐ Solitary

Pick one word and write what it means in your own words:

_____

_____

**4. My question: one thing I want to find out when I see the American black bear.**

_____

_____

## At the zoo · look closely

**Watch for one minute. What is it doing?**

☐ resting ☐ eating ☐ moving ☐ watching ☐ with others

**Draw or describe one body part that helps it survive, and say how it helps.**

*Draw here*

## After your visit · talk it over

**1. Check your prediction.** Native region: North America only. Was your guess right?

☐ yes ☐ no ☐ partly

**2. Diet check.** The fact sheet says: Omnivore: plants, berries, nuts, insects, honey, small animals. What did you learn about how it finds or eats food?

_____

_____

**3. Discuss with a partner, then write your best answer.**

• How can you tell a black bear from a brown bear without looking at its color?

_____

• What helps black bears climb trees so well?

_____

**4. Exit ticket.**

One thing I learned: _____

One thing I still wonder: _____

**ADJUST IT**

**Grades K–2:** talk and draw instead of writing; read the questions aloud. **Grades 6–8:** add evidence from the fact sheet and the animal page to every answer.

**Learn more:** plumptonparkzoo.org/mammals/american-black-bear/ · Fact sheet page 1 has the fast facts, map and vocabulary this page refers to.

**Grades K–4** · Maryland and Delaware (NGSS): **4-LS1-1 · 3-LS3-1 · K-ESS3-3** · Pennsylvania (STEELS): **3.1.4.A · 3.1.3.C · 3.3.K.E**

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