

# ALL ABOUT BLACK BEARS

## *Ursus Americanus*

BLACK BEARS in Placer County live primarily in the forested areas of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and the foothills.

- \* They have long shaggy coats which are usually black but may also be various shades of brown, from very pale to dark brown.
- \* They are very adaptable, especially when there is a nearby human population.
- \* Their **diet** is varied but mostly plant based. They are **omnivores**.
- \* They eat berries, young shoots, leaves, fruits, acorns, grubs, small mammals and fish. They are very adaptable and eat human food when it is accessible.
- \* They can live up to 30 years, though many only live for 10 years due to human activities.
- \* They have very few predators; mountain lions, bobcats and coyotes may occasionally attack cubs.
- \* Cubs are born in January or February (2-3 to a litter) and stay with their mother for about two years while they learn survival skills.
- \* They are excellent swimmers and tree climbers.
- \* Adult males are called boars and females are called sows.

# Black Bear





**Look for a combination of characteristics  
Color and size are sometimes misleading**

#### Tips to minimize conflicts with Black Bears while hiking:

- Keep a close watch on children, and teach them what to do if they encounter a bear.
- While hiking, make noise to avoid a surprise encounter with a bear.
- Never approach a bear or pick-up a bear cub.
- If you encounter a bear, do not run; instead, face the animal, make noise and try to appear as large as possible.
- If attacked, fight back.
- If a bear attacks a person, immediately call 911.

#### Bear Country Precautions

- Never keep food in your tent.
- Store food and toiletries in bear-proof containers or in an airtight container in the trunk of your vehicle.
- Keep a clean camp by cleaning up and storing food and garbage immediately after meals.
- Use bear-proof garbage cans whenever possible or store your garbage in a secure location with your food.
- If you encounter a bear, do not run; instead, face the animal, make noise and try to appear as large as possible.

**Please respect and protect wild animals.  
Keep them wild.**

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### FEATURES

**FUR:** Their fur is pretty thick. The outer coat consists of long guard hairs that shed moisture, and protect the bear from dirt and insects. The under coat is dense and wooly and keeps the bear warm. Each spring or early summer the black bear sheds his fur; he molts. Bears get rid of their old hair by rubbing against trees or rocks.

**FEET:** Bears walk on their whole foot, usually on 4 feet, but they can also stand and walk on their hind legs. Bears shed their foot pads over the winter. if you should see a bear print notice how the hind paw is longer and the front paw is wider.

**CLAWS:** Each paw has five toes with 2 inch non-retractable black or gray claws. Used for climbing trees, digging, raking up bedding, tearing (eg rotten logs in search for grubs).

**EARS:** Ears are set close together. Bears have good hearing. Ears help a bear sense danger.

**EYES:** Black bears can see well both at night and during the daytime. They have good close-up vision for finding food that is close to the ground.

**NOSE:** Excellent sense of smell. This helps them find food, mates, identify their cubs and avoid humans. Can detect smells 3 miles away!

**LIPS:** Lips are free from the gums so they can twist their lips to pick berries off bushes with them. Use lips and tongue for picking small food items. (ie grubs, berries, small plant shoots)

**TONGUE:** Bears have a long sticky tongue that can reach up to 6 inches out of its mouth as it picks up grubs and other small foods.

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**DIET:** Berries, young shoots, leaves, fruits, acorns, grubs, fish, small mammals, *and human food when accessible.*

**TEETH:** Bears have 42 teeth with which they eat plant foods and meat.

**MOLARS** or cheek teeth are for grinding and chewing plants.

**CANINES** are for tearing wood apart.

**INCISORS**, at the front of the mouth, are used for chomping, nibbling and tearing.

**DIASTEMA:** This is a gap behind their canine teeth and is used for stripping small branches of leaves.