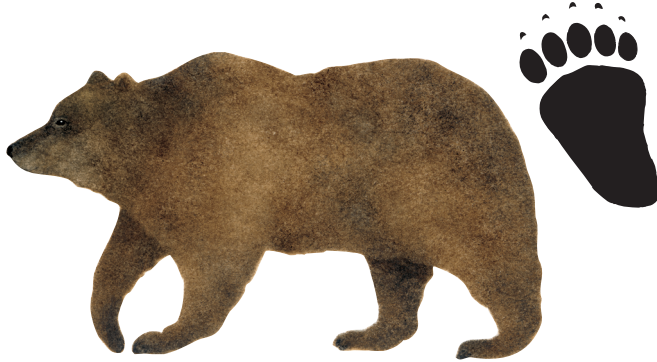




BARREN GROUND GRIZZLY

Ursus arctos

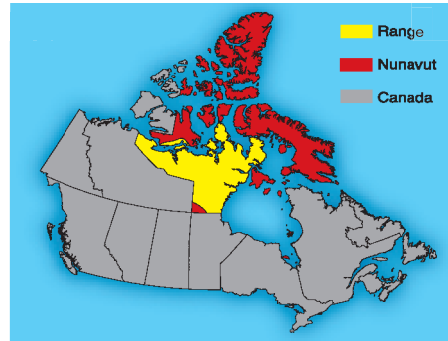


Appearance

Grizzly bears are the second largest carnivores after the polar bear. They have large heads with long snouts and two small, round, heavily furred ears. One of the ways to distinguish grizzly bears from black bears is that grizzlies have a noticeable hump on their shoulders. The claws of the front feet are long, sharp and pale yellow or brown in colour. Before shedding every year, grizzlies have long shaggy coats. Their fur is made up of coarse guard hairs and a thick coat of under-fur. Colours range from light gold to almost black with the lightest bears most commonly found on the barren lands or tundra. Grizzly bears in Nunavut are generally smaller than those found further south. They are at their largest in the fall before entering their dens and leanest in the spring when they emerge from their dens. Generally, females are smaller than males and reach their maximum weight before males do. Adult males and females can be anywhere between 146 and 382kg and measure an average of 2.6m in length.

Food And Feeding

Grizzlies are omnivorous. Some studies show that caribou are a very important food source for barren ground grizzlies. They appear to hunt them often during the spring, and from mid-summer to autumn. The young caribou provide a great source of food for the hungry bears and newborns. In addition, they feed on many small mammals such as lemmings, red-backed voles, ground squirrels and also some birds, ringed seals, beached whales and various kinds of spawning fish. During the summer, horsetail, sedge, arctic cotton grass and various berries make up a large portion of the bears' diet.



Behaviour

Grizzly bears are generally solitary animals although small groups may be seen feeding in the same area at certain times of the year. Grizzlies have good eyesight but their hearing and sense of smell are

excellent. They growl and roar when fighting and can run with great bursts of speed. Males tend to roam farther than females. Denning occurs in late October and November. Like black bears, their body temperatures drop slightly and they fall into a deep slumber. However, they can be awakened by noise or disturbances in the area. The timing when grizzlies enter and emerge from their dens varies, depending on their geographic location.

Range

In Nunavut, the grizzly can be found throughout the Kivalliq region and in large portions of the Kitikmeot and Baffin regions.

Reproduction

The breeding season for grizzlies is generally late spring to early summer. After a gestation period of 6 to 8 months the female gives birth to usually 2 cubs, although 1, 3 and even 4 are also possible. They are born in mid-winter and are the size of a small squirrel, weighing between 350-700g. Grizzlies have a litter every third year and the young stay with the mother for 2 or 3 years. In Nunavut, female grizzlies usually have their first litter at 8 years of age. Compared to other grizzly populations, this is quite late and makes barren ground grizzlies more sensitive to over-harvesting.

Status Survival and Management

According to the Nunavut Wild Species 2000 report, the status of grizzly bears is sensitive. Grizzlies live up to 25 years in the wild. They have no natural enemies other than humans. An increase in the number of encounters between humans and grizzlies is resulting in more 'nuisance' bears being killed. Hunting regulations and bear safety programs continue to be enforced in an effort to protect the slow growing populations.

