

BEARS

มูลนิธิเพื่อนสัตว์ป่า
Wildlife Friends Foundation



“ One of the most significant aspects of wildlife conservation is the education of local communities and raising awareness amongst tourists, who inadvertently create a big demand for the exploitation of wildlife ”.

Issues such as habitat loss, poaching, the illegal trade in wildlife as pets, the use of animals for entertainment in tourism, for the meat trade and use in traditional Chinese medicines, need to be fully understood by local communities and tourists in order for these problems to lessen.

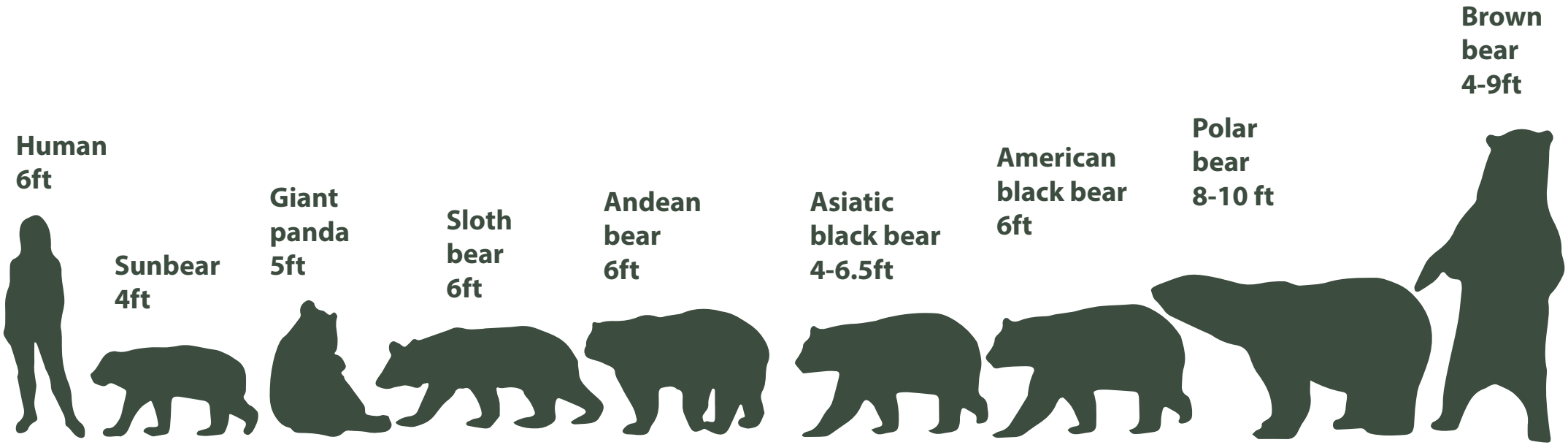
Making people understand the consequences of their actions and persuading them to change their habits and attitudes towards wildlife is the first step to protecting them. If the buying stops, the killing will too. This is a long and arduous process and requires a holistic approach to education.

Each year WFFT welcome 1000’s of visitors, whether as volunteers, day guests or school groups, we have a responsibility to educate them.

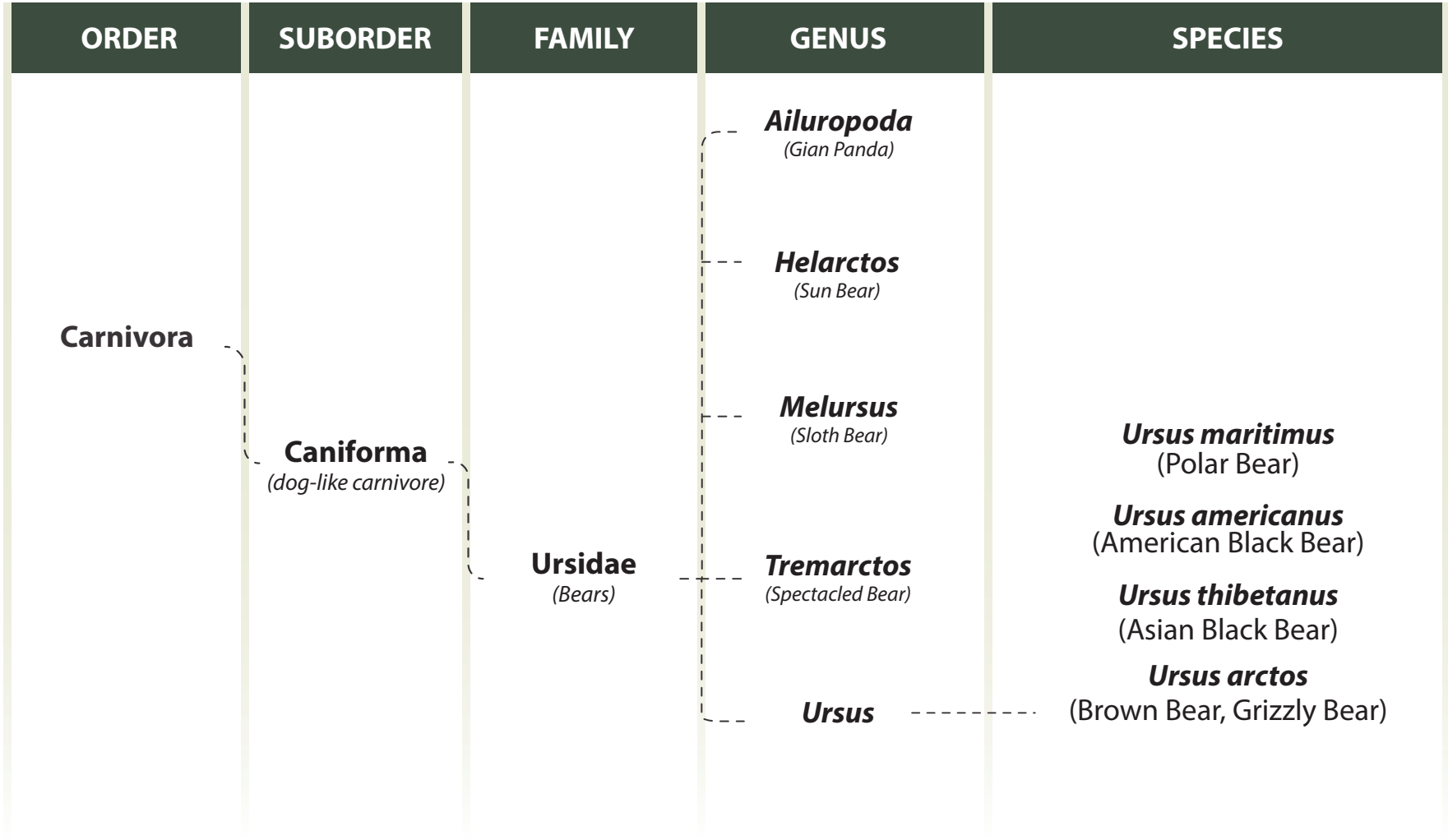
If you are an educator who is interested in visiting WFFT, please contact us at info@wfft.org for further information.

มูลนิธิเพื่อนสัตว์ป่า
Wildlife Friends Foundation

Bear Size Comparison



Taxonomy


ORDER
SUBORDER
FAMILY
GENUS
SPECIES
Carnivora
Caniforma
(dog-like carnivore)
Ursidae
(Bears)
Ailuropoda
(Gian Panda)
Helarctos
(Sun Bear)
Melursus
(Sloth Bear)
Tremarctos
(Spectacled Bear)
Ursus
Ursus maritimus
(Polar Bear)
Ursus americanus
(American Black Bear)
Ursus thibetanus
(Asian Black Bear)
Ursus arctos
(Brown Bear, Grizzly Bear)



Brown Bear
(Ursus arctos)



American Black Bear
(Ursus americanus)



Polar Bear
(Ursus maritimus)



Sloth Bear
(Melursus ursinus)



Andean Bear
(Tremarctos ornatus)



Malayan Sun Bear
(Helarctos malayanus)



Giant Panda
(Ailuropoda melanoleuca)



Asiatic Black Bear
(Ursus thibetanus)

- Giant Panda
- Malayan Sun Bear
- Sloth Bear
- Andean Bear
- American Black Bear
- Asiatic Black Bear
- Brown Bear
- Polar Bear

Species



Giant Panda
(Ailuropoda melanoleuca)
Vulnerable



Sun Bear
(Helarctos malayanus)
Vulnerable



Asiatic Black Bear
(Ursus thibetanus)
Vulnerable



Sloth Bear
(Melursus ursinus)
Vulnerable



Andean Bear
(Tremarctos ornatus)
Vulnerable



Polar Bear
(Ursus maritimus)
Vulnerable



Brown Bear
(Ursus arctos)
Least Concern



American Black Bear
(Ursus americanus)
Least Concern

There are eight species of bear distributed across the world.

Habitat

Bears inhabit a vast array of habitats throughout the world. While some species are known to live in the coldest places on earth others live in much warmer tropical regions.



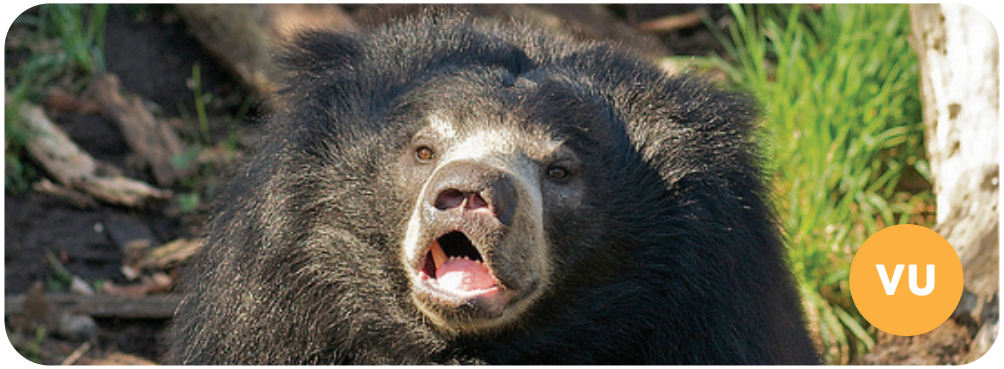
Polar Bears live in the Arctic, including the continental shelf and the surrounding archipelagos where it is extremely cold.

These bears spend most of their lives at sea in the Arctic Ocean. Therefore they are classified as marine mammals. Polar Bears are listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species.



There's only one species of bear in South America, **the Spectacled Bear (Andean bear)**. These bears prefer cloud forest and high Andean moorland as their habitat.

Spectacled bears are listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.
All other bear species live in the Northern Hemisphere;



Sloth Bears live in India and neighboring countries. They adapt well to many different habitats. Their thick and shaggy coat protects them from being bitten by termites (their favorite food). These bears are listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.



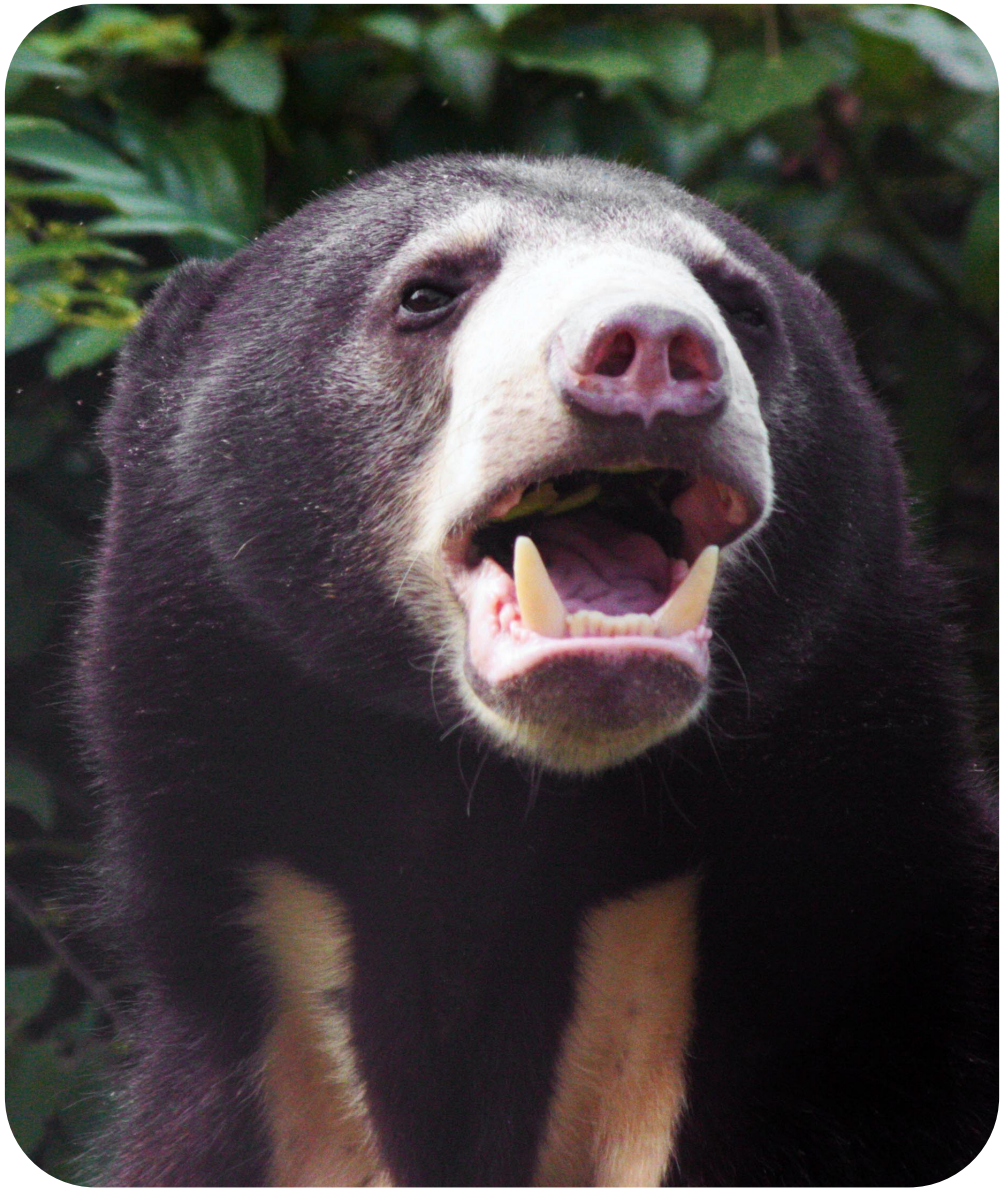
Brown Bears are the most widespread species. The largest populations are in Russia, Canada and the United States. The Brown Bear is listed as least concern on the IUCN Red List.



American Black Bear lives in the United States and Canada. These bears are the most familiar and common bears. They live in forests, mountains and swamps. They are listed as least concern on the IUCN Red List.



In a small mountain region of China lives the **Panda Bear**. They live mainly in bamboo forests high up in the mountains of western China. This habitat is cool and wet. The Panda is listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List.





Bears in Thailand

Malayan Sun Bear

Thai Name : หมีหมา หรือ หมีคน
Scientific Name : *Helarctos malayanus*
IUCN Status : VULNERABLE
Adult Size : 1-1.5m
Weight Range : 40-56kg

The Sun Bear is clearly distinguished from other bears by a white or yellowish patch on the chest. Sun Bears are excellent climbers and spend a considerable time in trees. Their lifespan in the wild is unknown, but the oldest known sun bear in captivity reached 35 years of age. The IUCN Red list classifies these animals as 'vulnerable'. They are often recognised as the most endangered bear species.

Habitat

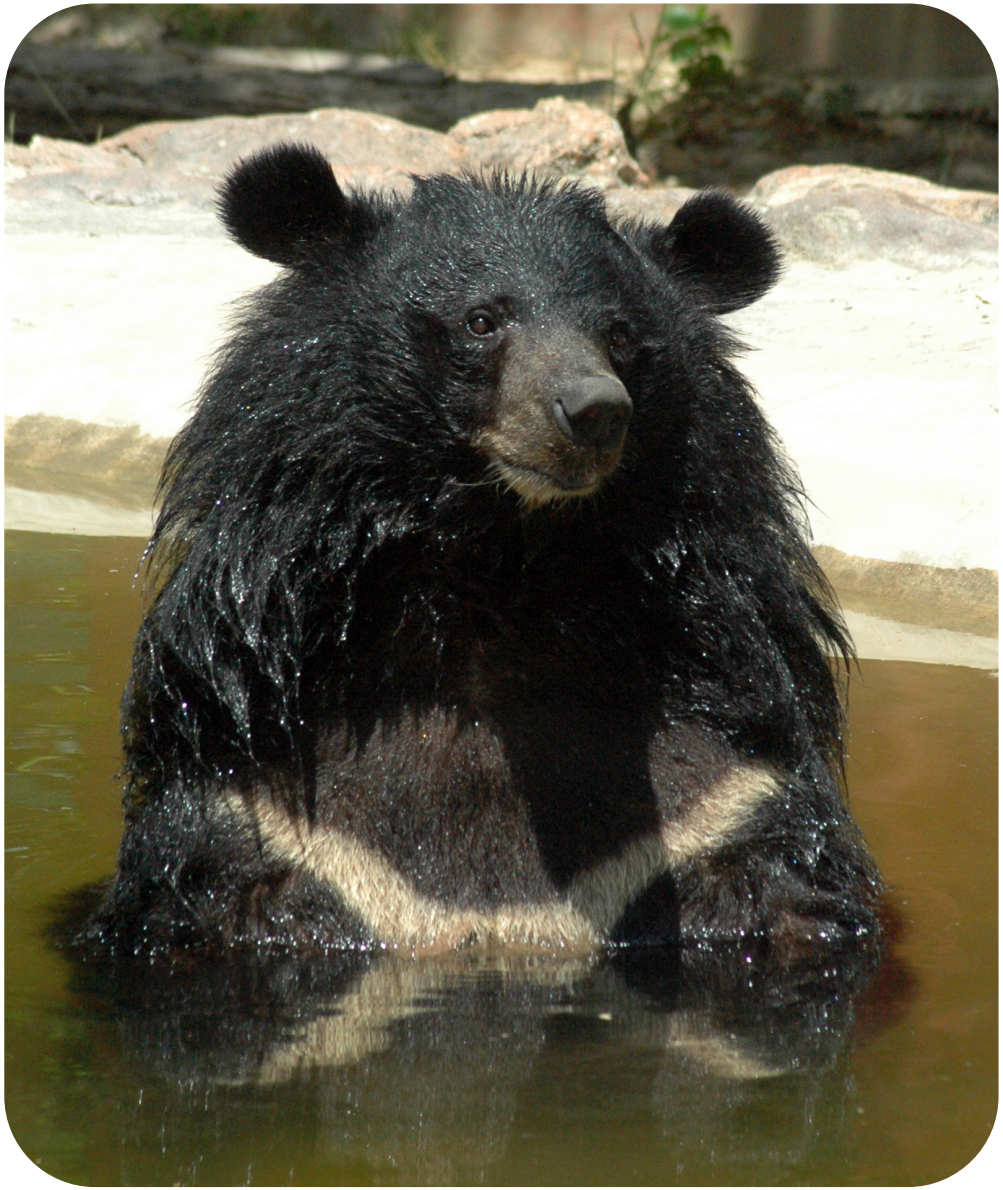
Sun Bears live at all elevations of dense tropical and subtropical forests in Southeast Asia. Thanks to their sharp claws they are very good at climbing tall trees, they are the only species who build nests in the tree canopy, and may be found as high as 7m.

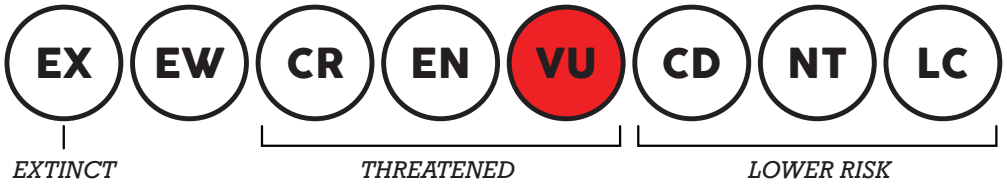
Diet

They feed on sweet fruits, small rodents, birds, termites, and other insects.

Threats

- Habitat loss, degradation & fragmentation.
- Poaching for gallbladders, meat and paws.
- Poaching for exotic pet trade.





Asiatic Black Bear

Thai Name : หมีหมา หรือ หมีคน
Scientific Name : *Ursus thibetanus*
IUCN Status : VULNERABLE
Adult Size : Up to 1.9m
Weight Range : 90-125kg

This medium-sized, black-colored bear has a light coloured muzzle and ears which appear large in proportion to the rest of its head, especially when compared with other species of bear. There is a distinct white patch on the chest , which sometimes forms the shape of a V, they also have a white patch on their chin.

Habitat

Asiatic Black Bears are mainly nocturnal and spend much of their time high in the trees on their quest for food, however they sleep mainly in caves, hollow trees or rock crevices. They reside predominantly in mountain forests throughout much of south Asia, although they tend to descent to lower elevations in the wintertime

Diet

Asiatic Black Bears are omnivores, their diet consists of fruit, berries, seeds, nuts, honey, grasses, invertebrates, fish, birds, rodents, other small mammals, as well as carrion.

Threats

- Habitat loss, degradation & fragmentation.
- Poaching for gallbladders, meat and paws.
- Poaching for exotic pet trade.

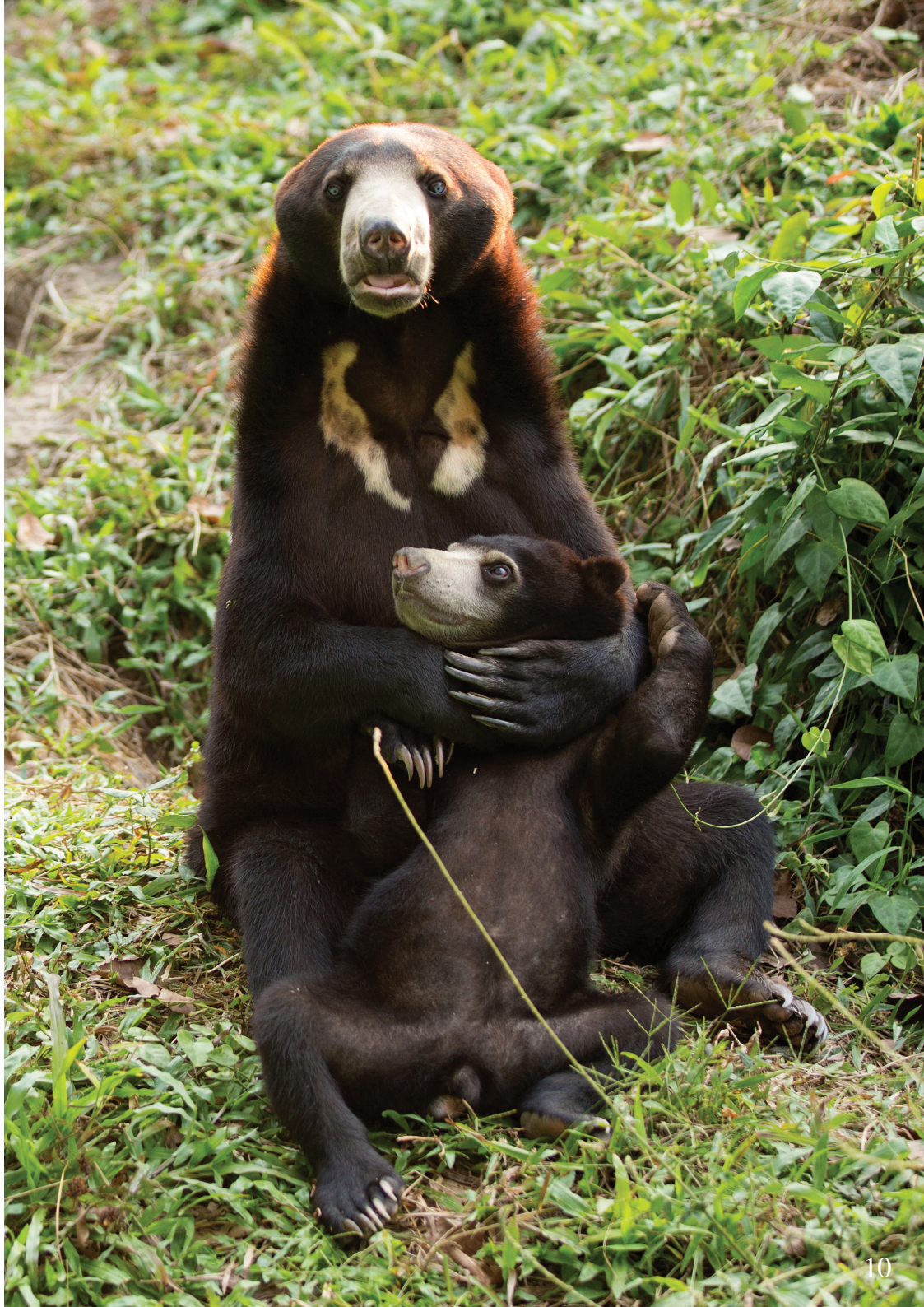
Biology

Life of bears

Bears are intelligent, powerfully built, have good memories and are curious animals; all qualities needed for a lifestyle where their habitat is large, varied and changeable with the seasons. They need to remember where a particular food source was found, what plants not to eat, and learn quickly what to avoid this includes human hunters. All bears can swim, and all (except Polar Bears) are good at climbing trees, particulary Sun Bears because of their relatively smaller size and massive claws.

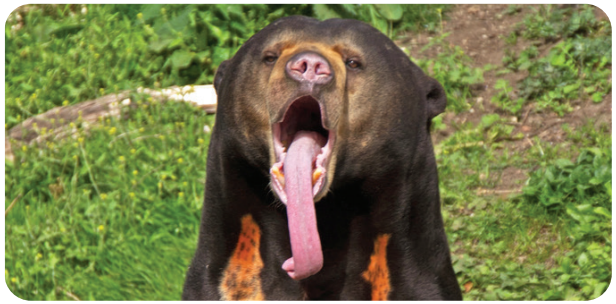
Bears are usually solitary, coming together only briefly during the mating season. However, Sun Bears are often sighted in pairs, leading to the notion that they may be monogamous. Sexual maturity is reached between 3 and 5 years old and a litter of one or two 300 g cubs are born on the forest floor after a gestation of about three and a half months. Sun Bears are the only bears known to carry their cubs in their arms.

Asiatic Black Bears are thought to have a specific breeding and birthing season. The female usually enters a rock cavity or hollow tree during winter or early spring. Normally, she gives birth to one or two tiny cubs, weighing approximately 300 g. The survival of the bear cubs is totally dependent upon the mother's ability for instilling survival skills in her young. The cubs will normally stay with the mother for the first year and a half until they are finally driven off as she prepares to breed once more.



Anatomy

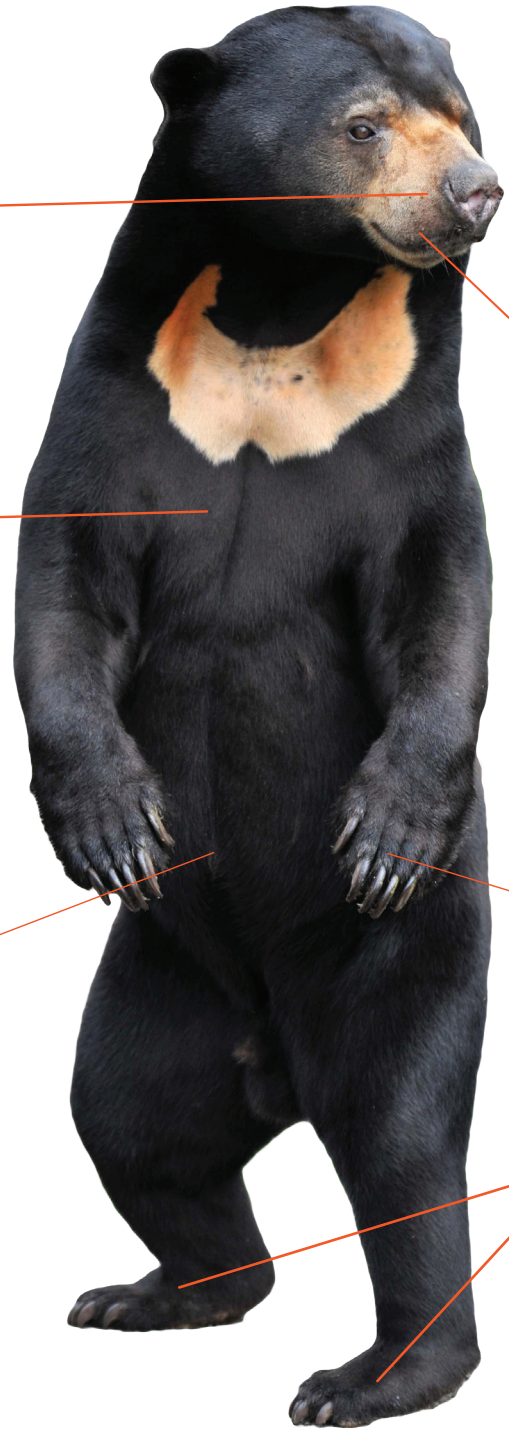
Even though there are many differences between the species there is a basic bear anatomy.



Apart from their finely tuned senses, bears have evolved some other highly useful survival tools. The Sun Bears nails are specialized tools for climbing trees and tearing into termite mounds, coconuts and anything else they want to get into.

Their massive claws relative to their body size are testament to this. Their pads and claws are adapted well for a combination of terrestrial and arboreal locomotion.

Most forest dwelling bears have long tongues for accessing food in hard to reach places. The Sun Bears tongue is specialised for lapping up honey, ants, termites and other delicacies.

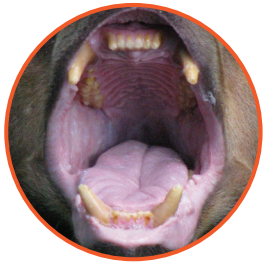


Their nose may be small, however their sense of smell is very powerful, they can find food from miles away.

Bear milk is very rich, having a fat content as high as 46%, compared to human milk at only 4%. This rich milk allows the tiny, blind, almost naked cubs to grow at a rapid rate.

They have powerful bodies which are very broad. Some bear species have to consume volumes of food when it is plentiful in order to store it up for the less productive months.

Layers of fat help them to regulate their body temperature.



Their teeth are not as sharp compared to other carnviores because of the large amounts of plants that they consume.

Their claws are very sharp and retractable.

A feature that sets bears apart from all other carnivores is their ability to walk on the soles of their feet rather than on their toes.

Black Bear vs Sun Bear

Asiatic Black Bear
(Ursus thibetanus)

Asiatic Black Bears are medium sized bears

Ears are large and stand out, pointing forward

Chest patch is creamish or white and is shaped like the letter 'V'

Long Hair

Asiatic black bears are polygynandrous, this means both males and females have multiple mating partners

Short claws

These animals are Omnivores, their diets consist of fruits, nuts honey and some smaller animals like fish, birds and rodents



Asiatic Black Bears are found in moist forests with areas of thick vegetation, usually on steep mountains

Sun Bear
(Helarctos malayanus)

Chest patch is golden, yellow, or white and is shaped like the letter "U"

Sun Bears have a staple diet of bees, honey and insects- such as larvae and termites. Fruits and nuts are also appealing to these bears, making up nearly half of their diet

The Sun Bear is the smallest bear species at around only 1.4 meters long and 100 lbs

Ears are small and round

Short hair

There is evidence suggesting Sun Bears may be monogamous, meaning they stay in a relationship with a single bear for their whole life

Long claws



Sun Bears prefer to live in tropical rainforests, however due to deforestation they have been forced to spread into tropical evergreen forests instead

Diet



Grasses | Reptiles | Fruits | Insects | Figs | Nuts | Small Mammals

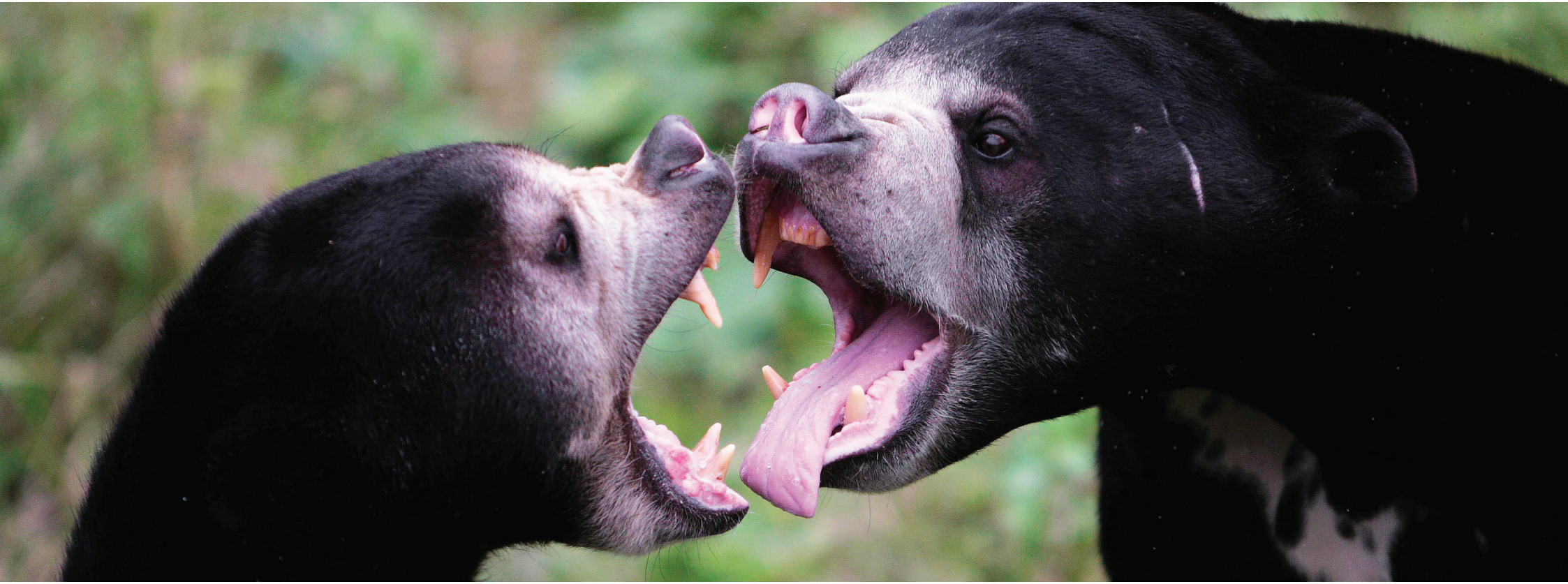
The Asiatic Black Bear remains an active carnivore even though it has adapted to a variety of environments and will, in some places, subsist on a plant-based diet.

Primarily a nocturnal animal, these bears will readily kill other mammals and have been known to occasionally destroy livestock. Seasonal availability and geographic location are the biggest factors determining the supplementary food sources of the bears. Eating virtually anything edible, their diet also consists of termites, beetles, larvae, honey, fruits, nuts and berries.

Sun Bears eat many plants and fruits including mushrooms and the growing tips of palm trees.

Sun bears have a particular fondness for honey, using their powerful claws to tear open bees nests. They also eat a variety of insects including termites, lizards, rodents, eggs or even small mammals they come across. They are mainly nocturnal feeders, spending much of the daylight hours sleeping in the trees.

Communication



Communication between bears is very well developed and involves vocal and visual signals as well as the use of smell (olfactory signals). Bears are usually quite silent but use a variety of vocalisations when encountering other bears. Asiatic Black Bears make a distinct clicking sound, using their tongue on the roof of their mouth, which is meant to indicate contentment. Whereas Sun Bears sound more like they are bleating. Mother bears also call to their cubs, which respond with whimpering, crying, barking and even

Aggressive behaviour usually involves a direct stare and posturing, or displaying the paws. Roaring and displaying a wide-open jaw which exposes the teeth are also used in dominance displays. If displays fail, bears may fight and can suffer severe wounds. Bears also use their sense of smell to identify the territories of other bears and to find receptive mates when they want to reproduce.

Exploitation

Pets

In Thailand, as in most countries, it is illegal to keep protected wildlife as pets. However a certain ignorance to the law and a big lack of enforcement of the law have lead to a very lucrative illegal pet trade and the problem of thousands of wild animals in captivity across the country.

Animals are poached from the wild as babies, usually killing the mother in the process. Many pet owners get rid of the animals after a short time because they are hard work to feed and look after or because they grow too big and aggressive to handle.

That is certainly the case with bears. Some end up locked in a small cage or are dumped at a temple or rescue centre. Many of the bears at WFFT were ex-pets or found abandoned at a temple.

Sometimes people buy animals at markets because they feel sorry for them and bring them straight to a rescue centre. However, this merely sustains the trade and means the trader will get another animal from the wild to sell again.






Photo-prop Bear

มูลนิธิเพื่อนสัตว์ป่า
Wildlife Friends Foundation



Bears in entertainment

Although it's mainly elephants, crocodiles, tigers, monkeys and orangutans exploited as performing animals in Thailand, many bears are being kept in sub-standard zoos across the country typically in concrete pits, where the public can leer down and throw things at them.

These bear pits create an olfactory vacuum, trapping the odours of the bears waste and rotting food. This confined and stressful environment, along with the torture of their highly developed sense of smell, make life hell for these bears. Often they are denied regular fresh drinking water, proper nutrition and adequate veterinary care.



Bear Baiting



Dancing Bear



Circus bear



Bear Bile Farming

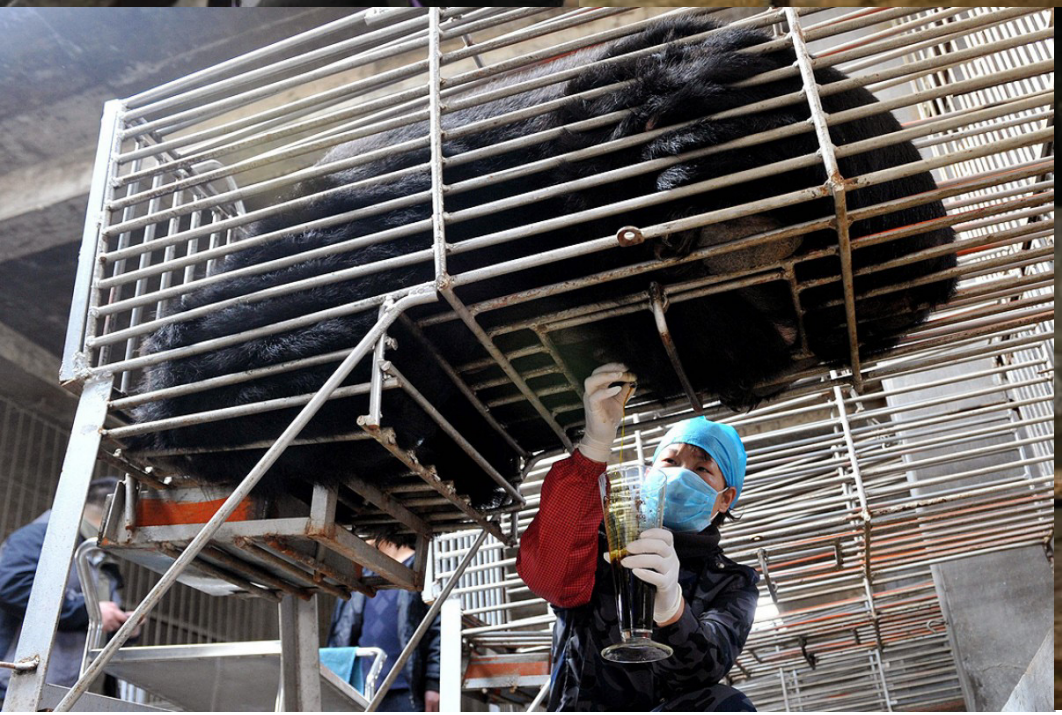
Many animal parts are used in making remedies for Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) . One of these is the bile extracted from the gall-bladders of bears. Even though the active substance (Ursodeoxycholic acid) can be synthetically produced without having to take it from a bear.

It is always cheaper and easier to poach animals from the wild than to breed them, and bile farming methods are particularly in-humane. Therefore this has serious animal welfare and conservation implications. A lot of illegally traded wildlife is smuggled via Thailand on its way to China and some of the bears here at WFFT have been confiscated along this route.











Bear Bile Farming



Food

Bear meat is said to be valued as a sexual- performance and health booster. A bowl of bear claw soup sometimes sells for hundreds of dollars. South Koreans, Taiwanese and Chinese tourists go to restaurants in Thailand where, it has been reported; "The bear is tortured to death in front of the diners. They say it makes the meat taste better. The cost of the bear banquet is now about 9000 US dollars."

The trade of Sun Bear meat in other parts of Southeast Asia is also fairly common, but the bears are particularly poached from this region to supply the trade in China and Korea.

Many countries have a legislation in place to ban the use of endangered species in restaurants. However the lack of enforcement allows for a continued and lucrative illegal trade wherever there are Chinese or Korean communities.




มูลนิธิเพื่อนสัตว์ป่า
Wildlife Friends Foundation



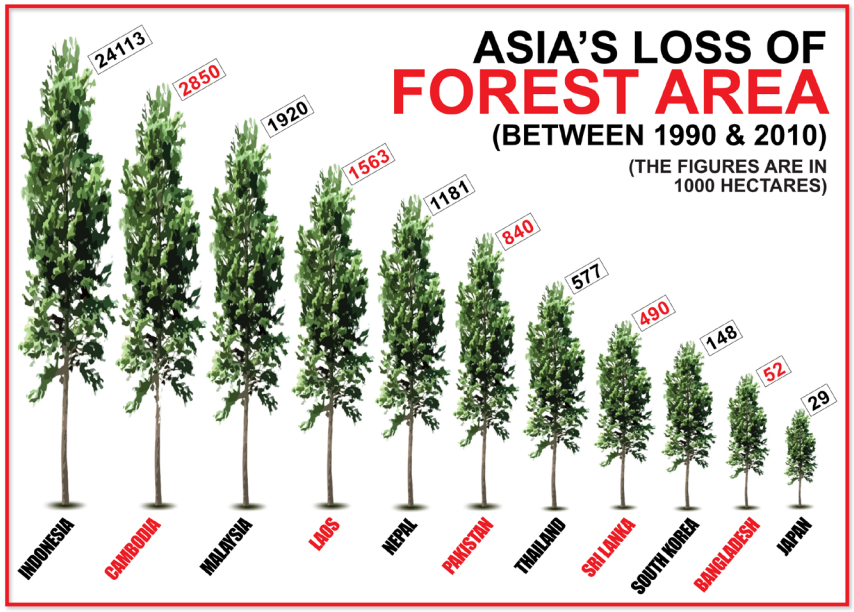
Threats



Habitat destruction

Bears are intelligent and curious animals that have adapted well to live in some of the most inhospitable areas of the world. Despite this, conflicts and exploitation by humans have reduced the numbers and distribution of many species by more than 50% over the last 100 years. Little is known about Sun bear populations in the wild, but there are thought to be less than 50.000 Asiatic black bears left in the entirety of their wide range across Asia.

Bears in Asia are amongst the most endangered in the world. Throughout most of their range, few direct conservation programs are established and where there is supposedly legal protection, it is rarely enforced.



(SOURCE: UN, GLOBAL FOREST RESOURCES ASSESSMENT 2010)

The large scale deforestation for development of road networks, urban areas and agricultural land that plagues Southeast Asia, fuelled by illegal agricultural practices, creates the biggest danger for species and general biodiversity in this region.

While the main threat to bears and other wildlife in the region is the rapid and continued destruction of their habitat, bears are also caught from the wild for zoos and circuses; killed for their fur, meat, gall bladders and paws; farmed for their bile; used in cruel bear dancing shows and for bear baiting.



Joy (F)
Asiatic Black Bear
Rescued 2018

Finally, some Joy in her Life…

We heard about an Asiatic Black Bear in dire need of help. Joy was being kept in a small cage in her owners garden. They had decided, after keeping her for years, that it was time to find a more suitable home for her, so they called us to see if we could help. The team headed out as soon as possible to investigate. We arrived at the place Joy was being kept and spoke to her owners. They explained very vaguely that someone had given Joy to them when she was still a cub, and since then they kept her as a pet. We were told that she came from the Kanchanaburi Province in Western Thailand. It is likely that she was poached from the wild after her mother was killed so her body parts could be sold in the illegal trade.

After a short time of keeping Joy it became increasingly difficult to handle her, so she was condemned to a small cage for 15 years. Many captive bears are kept in deplorable conditions such as these, they cannot express natural behaviors or experience natural things.







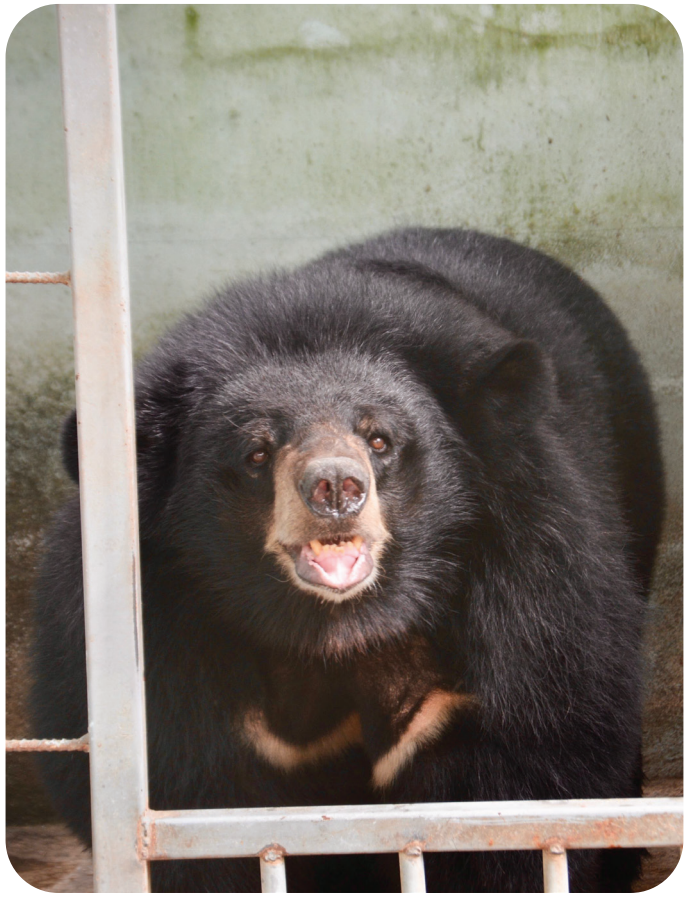
Joy had not felt grass under her feet, been able to climb trees, seen the open sky or swam in natural streams for over a decade. The team got to work preparing her for the journey back to the WFFT.

In many countries they are commonly seen living with people who are attempting to raise them as pets, these cubs often originate from the poaching of their mother for the traditional medicine trade.

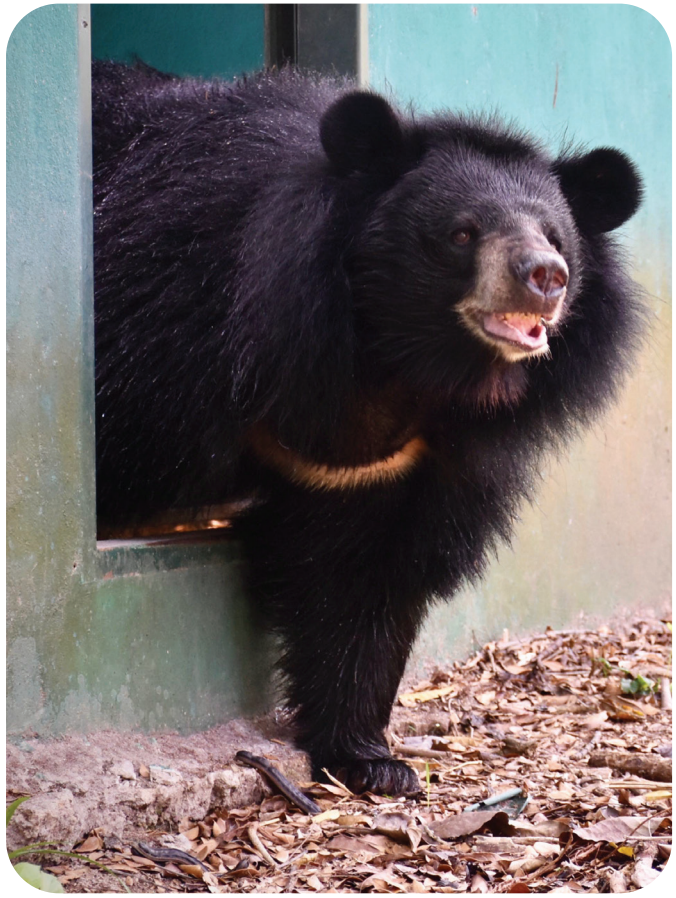
The Asiatic Black Bear is protected under both international and national laws, but often these laws are not enforced.

15 years is a long time in solitary confinement. After the long journey back to WFFT Joy was kept in a quiet quarantine area while she settled into to her new abuse free life. Once she had settled in she was given access to a large forested enclosure where she could once again learn how to be a bear.

Joy (F)
Asiatic Black Bear
Rescued 2018









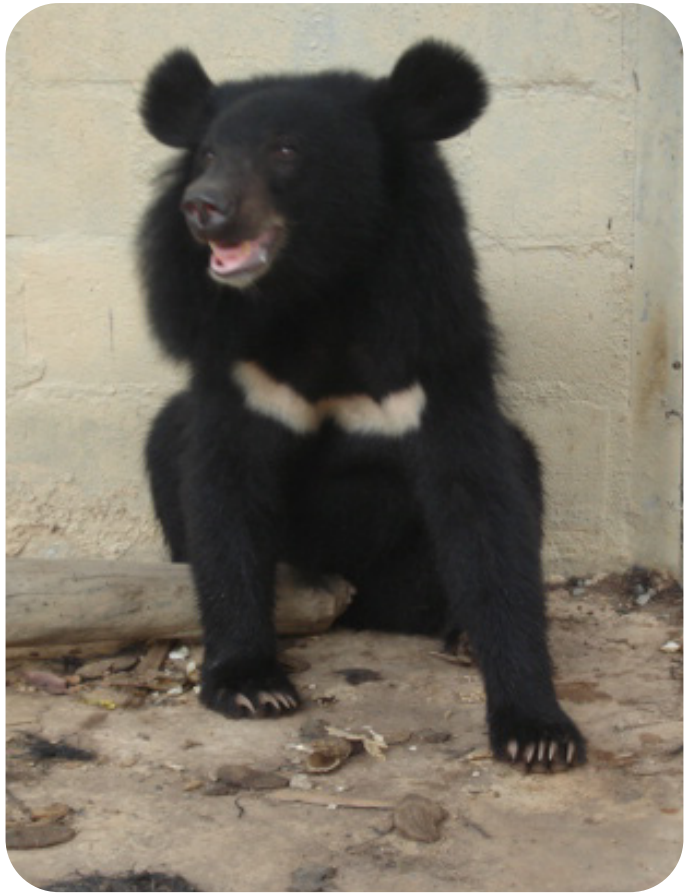
มูลนิธิเพื่อนสัตว์ป่า
Wildlife Friends Foundation

Jammy (F)
Asiatic Black Bear
Rescued 2009

Jammy was rescued along with Do Do a male Malayan Sun Bear from a pig farm in Ratchaburi, about 1 hour south from Bangkok. The bears were being housed in poor filthy conditions and obviously malnourished. The owner originally bought them as pets and was now bored with them. He had invited his staff to slaughter them for food, at which point a concerned neighbour stepped in and "rescued" the bears from the pot by buying them.

The new owner was obliged to take the bears away from their current location and had nowhere to look after them. Government rescue centres had turned them down due to lack of space/re- sources. However, the bears were already starting to break out of their inadequate cages. Previously a gibbon was housed in the cage next to Jammy, but she found a way in and ate the gibbon.

Jammy (F)
Asiatic Black Bear
Rescued 2009









Do Do (M)
Malayan Sun Bear
Rescued 2009

Do Do (M)
Malayan Sun Bear
Rescued 2009







What Can You Do To Help?



DO NOT

have photos with wild animals being used as photo props.



DO NOT

purchase animal souvenirs, including snake or tiger wine, bush meat, ivory or any other animal products. When the buying stops the killing stops too!



DO NOT

go to animal shows, visit elephant (trekking) camps, tiger temples or petting zoos.



DO

your research! Only visit ethical rescue and rehab centers. Or even better see them in the wild!



DO

tell your tell family and friends Write a story for your local newspaper back home, describing your experience in Thailand.



RAISE

awareness, spread the word and share your experiences in social media.



REPORT

animal abuse or illegal wildlife trade to the relevant authorities and WFFT at

Department of National Parks

Calling 1362 (24 hours) or hotline1362@hotmail.com

Wildhawk Facebook

Send a message to @DNP.WILDHAWK

Wildlife Friends Foundation

Report on our website WFFT.org

มูลนิธิเพื่อนสัตว์ป่า
Wildlife Friends Foundation

Follow Us on Social Media or Visit Our Website!



@WFFThailand



WFFT Wildlife Friends





Wildlife Friends Foundation



WFFT.org