

Endangered Species and Spaces

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3.1 Grizzly Bear: *Ursus arctos horribilis* (Linnaeus) Order: *Carnivora* Family: *Ursidae*

Satus:

Global Rank: G4
COSEWIC: Vulnerable
Provincial Rank: S3

Provincial listing: **Blue** list



Distinguishing Features

Grizzly bears have gained the reputation for being the most ferocious and dangerous mammal in North America. They usually are larger than black bears. They have a 'grizzled' grey-brown coat, broad head and relatively long snout. They have small, rounded heavily furred ears and a prominent hump on the shoulders. The claws of the forefeet are long and utilized in digging for prey such as ground squirrels. There is a high individual variation in size and colouration. Adults weigh from 136 - 526 kg. (Banfield, 1974)

Distribution

Columbia Basin: Throughout the Columbia Basin in suitable habitat.

British Columbia: It is estimated that there are about 10,000 - 13,000 Grizzly Bears distributed over about 80% of the province. However, they are greatly affected by loss of habitat from human settlement and development. This eliminates or fragments the vast amounts of land needed for Grizzlies to survive. They are extirpated over large areas in the Peace River lowlands, the southern Interior and south coast, and are very sparse and endangered adjacent to these areas (Cannings et al. 1999)

Global: Historically, Grizzly Bears had a vast distribution across Eurasia, North Africa, and North America. However, it has been extirpated from most of its range. The only places where substantial populations still exist are in Russia and in northwestern North America (Nagorsen 1990).

Habitat

Grizzlies prefer open areas such as alpine tundra or subalpine forests.

Critical Grizzly Bear habitat includes salmon spawning areas, herb-dominated avalanche slopes, estuaries, skunk cabbage swamps, fen/marsh and riparian meadow/wetland complexes, *Vaccinium*-dominated post-fire stands, subalpine parkland meadows, and *Hedysarum* and Glacier Lily complexes (Cannings et al. 1999).

Threats

Direct, human-caused mortality-hunting, poaching, and killing associated with poor garbage management or direct conflicts with humans or livestock-is a major threat. The other primary concerns are habitat loss and fragmentation as a result of forestry and fire suppression, and expanding human settlement with its associated developments. Poaching is believed to cause 25%-100% of known kills on a regional/seasonal basis (Cannings et al. 1999).

Biology

Grizzly Bears are solitary, opportunistic omnivores that have a home range of fifty to several hundred square kilometres, usually larger for males than females. Vegetable foods, such as roots, sedges, horsetails, sweet vetch, grasses, and berries, comprise the main portion of their diet. A lesser portion consists of insects, small mammals, carrion, and fish. Seasonal migration to lower elevations in the spring, and to higher elevations in mid-summer correspond to food availability. They remain at high elevations in winter where a den is dug, in which they hibernate from October-November to April-May. Females take at least four years to become sexually mature. Mating occurs in the spring and early summer. Implantation is delayed, and gestation lasts about 184 days, resulting in the birth of 2 cubs, on average, inside the den. Cubs will generally remain with the mother for the first two winters. Females may mate only every third year (Cannings et al. 1999)

For recent research on Grizzly and Black Bears, check out the Columbia Mountains Institute of Applied Ecology website at <http://www.cmiae.org>

Mammals

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