

# BEAR

## URSUS ARCTOS

### Distinguishing marks:

Length of the body 133-280 cm, shoulder height 60-100 cm, weight 60-300 kg (generally 80-190 kg, depends on the time of the year). Males much larger than females. Tail is short and ears circular. Colour of the bushy fur changes from black to rather light yellow brown. The cubs often have white neck. Good hearing and sense of smell, sight not extremely good.

### Prevalence:

Nowadays almost in all parts of Finland with exception of southwest and quite northernmost Lapland. Bear is found mostly from the reindeer area in the north and in East-Finland.

### Habitat:

Lives in the forests, especially pleased with old ones like dense spruce woods. Manages also as companion of the human. Nourishment and calmness important.

### Life styles:

Moving mostly when dark and at night, but also in daytime. Lives alone. Climbs trees and swims very well. Bear is a plantigrade, which can move quickly if needed. Goes to its winter nest in the late autumn and sleeps the whole winter fast asleep up to April or May.

### Nourishment:

Omnivorous, but mostly vegetable food. In spring and autumn bear has meat eating periods because it has to rise its weight before and after hibernation. Digs underground parts of the plants, eats berries, leaves, grain, little mammals, carcasses and fish etc. May kill also deers, sometimes farm animals. Bear devours spruce twigs before winter sleep, it needs gum to its digesting system.

### Breeding:

Mating time is in the summer from May to the beginning of July. Although mating occurs in summertime, the fertilized eggs are not implanted into the womb until fall. This gives the pregnant sow time to feed and store food for herself and her cubs. Gestation takes 194 to 278 days, and birth occurs in the den during the winter. The newborn cubs (2-3) are blind, toothless, and almost hairless. They are weigh around 250g. The cubs follow their mother until next spring. Female doesn't breed every year. That's why male can kill cubs, if he gets a chance. Bear becomes mature in 2-3 years age.

### Population:

During the last century large predators were persecuted, and bear population reduced greatly. In 1960s there were only 150 bears left. In 1970s population started to recover and year 1981 was counted already 350 bears and amount has still risen over 500.

### Hunting:

Hunting is permitted in autumn only during two months. Driving the bear away from its winter nest and firing from platform is forbidden. iron traps and snowmobiles prohibited too. Female with cub or a-year-old bear are protected.

### Preservation:

Hunting regulations are the base of the protection. Bear is the national animal of Finland.

