
How Many Different Bears Are There In North America?

This can be very confusing when you are traveling around North America. Depending on where you are bears have many names which may cause one to think that there are several types of bears.

Here is a list of some common names you may have heard a bear being called. Black bear, glacier bear, white bear, spirit bear, Kermode bear, cinnamon bear, grizzly bear, brown bear, Kodiak bear, coast bear, silver back bear, polar bear, snow bear, ice bear.

Now matter how many names are given to the bears in North America, there are only three species of bears. The black bear *Ursus americanus*, grizzly bear *Ursus arctos horribilis*, Latin for “horrible northern bear and the polar bear *ursus maritimus*.

Is It A Grizzly Bear or A Black Bear?

Do you know how to tell a black bear from a grizzly bear? Both bears can sometimes be found in the same area. Perhaps not together, one or the other emerging from the woods at different times. Knowing the difference can determine how you should react.

When determining what kind of bear you are seeing, is it a black bear or a grizzly bear? It is best not to go on colour alone. Bears come in a variety of colour phases, so physical characteristics are the best way to determine the type of bear you might be seeing.

When out and about in “Bear Country” it is important to tell a black bear from a grizzly bear.

Here is a list of characteristics that can help you make an identification. The first five on the list can usually be seen from a distance. If you are close enough to see the shape of the claws you are too close to be sure.

You can use the paws to determine which bear is likely in an area by the tracks the bear leaves behind. There is a difference between a black bear and a grizzly bear print. I will get to that in a moment.

Comparing the physical differences between a black bear and a grizzly bear will help to identify which one you are looking at. The physical differences to look for are the size, weight, face shape, should/rump differences, ear shape and the claws and paws.

Face, Shoulder, Ears And Rump!

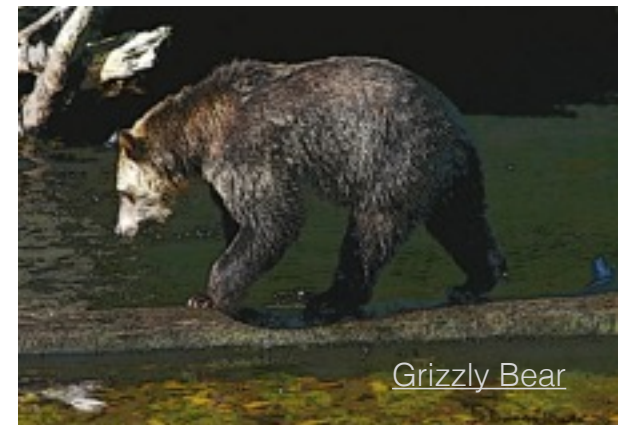
Here are four questions to ask yourself when identifying a bear. Almost like the nursery rhyme “head, shoulder, knees and toes” Look at the “face, shoulders, ears and rump!” A black bear as a conical or cone shaped face and has rather large slightly more pointed ears than a grizzly. The grizzly has a dish shaped face with smaller more rounded “teddy bear” ears. One of the most prominent characteristics of a grizzly bear is its huge shoulder muscle, as you can see in the photo the black bear doesn’t have that hump. Black bears are higher in the rump and lower in the shoulders where as the grizzly is higher in the shoulders and lower in the rump.

- **Does it have a conical face or a dish shaped face?**
- **Does the bear have a distinctive shoulder hump?**
- **What shape are the ears? Large and pointed or smaller and rounded?**
- **Is the rump higher than its shoulder’s or is it lower?**

Survival Secrets of Grizzly Bears and Black Bears!

Fact Sheet #1

Daryl Dancer
Nature, Art, Grizzly Bears



The History of Bears

Do you know how many species of bears there are in the world? And do you know which one is the oldest and which one is the youngest?

Bears Of the World



Number of Bear Species In the World Is...

There are eight different species of bear in the world. The oldest bear species in the world is the Giant Panda.

The Giant Panda is at least 20 million years old and the youngest bear species in the world is the Polar Bear.

It is anywhere between 20,000 and 200,000 years old which makes it the youngest species in the world. Most mammals are at least one million years old.

When Did Bears Come To North America?

The grizzly bear came to North America well over 10,000 years ago by crossing the Bering Sea Land bridge, they ranged from the Great Plains down into Mexico and West to the Coast and into Alaska.

Today, the area where these magnificent creatures inhabit has been reduced to only a fraction of their original habitat.

The Black Bear came to North America long before the grizzly bear and populated forested areas across North America.