

Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*)

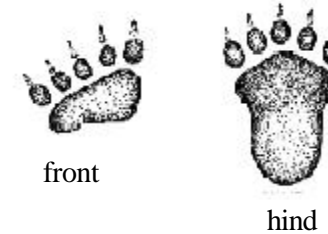
Description: Black bears are large, heavily boned mammals. On average, adult females weigh from 50 to 100 kg and males between 100 to 300 kg. Measuring from 1 to 2 metres in length, their body is stout with short and powerful legs. Their eyes are small and ears are erect. Black bears have a long shaggy coats. Typically they are black in colouration with a small percentage (about 5%) being brown.

Habitat and Range: Black bears are primarily found in forested or swampy areas. On average, their home range extends from 15 to 25 square km for females and about double that size for males. Using well developed navigational abilities, they can migrate over 200 km in search of food sources such as blueberry patches or stands of nut producing trees.

Diet: Black bears are omnivores (they consume both plants and animals). Up to 95% of the Black Bear's diet consists of plant material including flowers, leaves, buds, berries and roots. To meet their protein needs bears forage on small vertebrates, ants, bees, and grubs. On occasion, bears will feed on newborn deer and moose.



Tracks



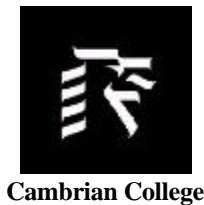
Behaviour: Black bears are most active during the evening and early morning but can be seen at any time of the day. They are generally reclusive animals who keep to themselves and shy away from human contact in the wild.

Orphan Black Bear Release Study (2002-2004)

History: In the fall of 2001, central Ontario experienced a significant increase in the number of apparently orphaned bear cubs. Due to the severe drought and the failure of berry crops many bears sought alternative sources of food in urban areas. As a consequence, many of these bears lost their natural fear of humans and had to be removed or even destroyed, resulting in the orphaning of cubs. Altogether, nearly 200 cubs were captured and spent the winter in three private wildlife re-habilitation centres. In the spring of 2002 these orphaned bears were once again returned to the wild.

Objectives of the Study: During May and June 2002, 60 orphan bears were sexed, weighed, measured and fitted with expandable radio collars and released in the central Georgian Bay sphere. Until the year 2004, these bears will be monitored closely in order to meet the following objectives:

- * To determine survival, mortality (rates and causes) and the incidence of nuisance behaviour of orphaned rehabilitated yearling bears.
- * To determine the effect of different rehabilitation methods on yearling bear survival and foraging behaviour.
- * To aid in the development of provincial bear cub rehabilitation guidelines and policy.



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