

**MARCH 1 – 14, 2020 NATURAL HISTORY NOTES**  
**By Dick Harlow**

**BLACK, BROWN, KODIAK BEAR**



**American Black Bear, *Ursus americanus*,**  
© Foxnews.com

Within the confines of North America, the American Black Bear, *Ursus americanus*, is ranked the smallest and the most common of our bear species. Black Bears eat almost anything, plants, other animals, berries, anything an omnivore would eat. They are seasonal animals knowing what food is available and at what time during the season.

Black Bears primarily live in forested areas. However, when they are scrounging for food, they will venture into unforested areas if there is the chance that they will find food. Human habitation in forested or semi-forested areas represents for bears a perfect opportunity to procure food at minimum expense of their energy.

Here in the East we only have the Black Bear in our forests. However, if you were living in the west you would or could have both the Black Bear and the Grizzly Bear, *Ursus arctos horribilis*.

According to 'Get Bear Smart Society':

"Black bears can be black, blue-black, dark brown, cinnamon and even white. Grizzlies, likewise, may range in color, from black to blond. Although grizzly bears are, on average, significantly larger than black bears, size is not a good indicator of which species is which. Male black bears in Manitoba's Riding Mountain National Park, for instance, can weigh up to 800 pounds in the fall, and female grizzly bears on Alberta's Eastern Slopes can weigh as little as 250 pounds in the spring.

The best indicators are the **size of the shoulders**, the **profile of the face** and the **length of the claws**. The grizzly bear has a pronounced shoulder hump which the black bear lacks. Grizzlies have a concave or "dished" facial profile, smaller ears and much larger claws than the black bear. Black bears have a flatter, "Roman-nose" profile, larger ears, no visible shoulder hump and smaller claws."



Courtesy of Center for Wildlife Information  
Graphic Art Fund

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There are two major Brown Bear subspecies in North America. The Grizzly Bear, *Ursus arctos horribilis*, and the Kodiak Bear, also known as the Alaskan Brown Bear, *Ursus arctos middendorffi*.

Both the Grizzly and Kodiak are Brown Bears. The fact to remember when dealing with brown bears is that even though grizzlies are brown, not all brown bears are grizzlies.



**Grizzly Bear**, *Ursus arctos horribilis*,  
© en.wikipedia.org

Generally, there is confusion when one mentions brown bear. If you are from the east and have never seen a Grizzly, brown might be confused with a color phase of the Black Bear. Not the case! On the other hand, to limit the confusion, think of all brown bears as being Grizzlies, an interior bear; whereas the Kodiak Brown Bear lives on the coastal islands of Alaska and are brown, but also huge! They can stand 10 feet tall on their hind legs with claws longer than your fingers. A bear I would love to see in the wild, but not up close!

Grizzlies are larger than the Black Bear, are colored brown and has that characteristic hump between the shoulders in back of the head. On its hind legs it can stand 8 feet high. Bears from Black to Grizzly to Kodiak can weigh from 300 lbs. to 600 lbs. to as much as 1500 lbs. It is no wonder they are at the top of the food chain.



**Kodiak Bear**, *Ursus arctos middendorffi*,  
© sco.wikipedia.org

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All bears are omnivores, with diets that vary with the season. As mentioned with the Black Bear, all bears will leave the forest for food items, e.g. salmon as the salmon move from the ocean to the river on their migration to spawn. When food is scarce bears do look for human opportunities, e.g. dumps, trash cans, etc.



Kodiak Bear standing 10-feet tall.  
© quora.com

### **OBSERVATIONS**

#### **MAMMALS**

Gray Fox – 1

Red Fox – 1

Coywolf - sounds of a pup begging for food.

#### **Weather Tidbits**

**Month of MARCH 1-14, 2020**

*All Measurements taken at solar noon (1230 EST).*

#### **PRECIPITATION**

**Total Precipitation: 13.4 mm or 0.53 inches**

**Overcast Days: 7**