

THE BEAR BASICS

Asiatic black bear or moon bear (*Ursus thibetanus*)

APPEARANCE

- Moon bears typically have black fur with a distinct white V-shaped chest marking & often have a white patch on their chin
- The ears are round & appear large compared to other bear species
- Most are black although brown or golden moon bears have been seen

SIZE

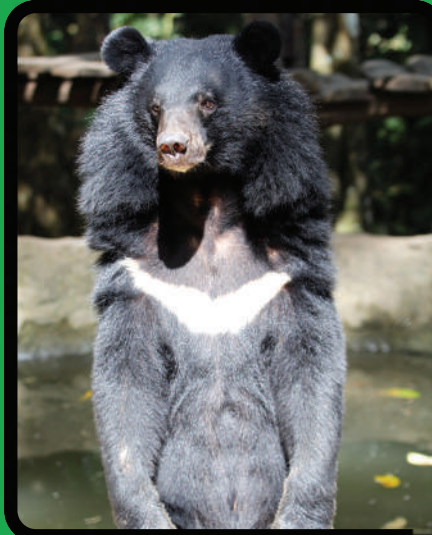
- Moon bears are a medium-sized bear species
- Standing on their hind legs, adult moon bears can stand up to 183cm or 6 foot tall
- Adult males can weigh from 100-200kg but are typically 110-150kg
- Adult females can weigh from 50-125kg but are typically 65-90kg

DIET

- Moon bears are omnivores & feed on a wide variety of foods including fruits, bees' nests, insects, invertebrates, small vertebrates, and carrion
- In Autumn they frequently make crude leafy feeding platforms in nut-bearing trees
- They are poor digesters which helps disperse seeds from nuts & fruits in the forest

DISTRIBUTION & HABITAT

- Found in 18 countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, China, India, Iran, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Taiwan, Thailand & Vietnam
- Mostly live in mountainous forests, also tropical forests
- In cooler mountainous areas they may den for winter sleep



STATUS & THREATS

- An endangered species, it is classed as '**Vulnerable**' on the IUCN Red List (high risk of extinction in the wild)
- Threats include habitat loss; poaching for illegal wildlife trade (parts and traditional medicine), wire snare traps left by hunters, selling bear cubs into the exotic 'pet' trade, human-bear conflicts and bear bile farms

BEHAVIOUR

- Although large, they are great climbers & will climb tall trees looking for honey
- They enjoy water & their strong forearms ensure they are good swimmers
- Smell is their strongest sense (2-3,000 times more powerful than humans)
- Moon bears make a clucking sound as a greeting to show they mean no harm

REPRODUCTION

- Moon bears can reproduce at 3-4 years of age
- It is thought they can delay implantation of embryos, with births generally in the spring
- Normally there are 2-3 cubs, weaned by 6 months, but spend 2-3 years with mothers
- Lifespan is believed to be 25-35 years
- Moon bears are solitary in the wild

FUN FACTS

- Moon bears are named after the crescent-shaped chest patch that looks like a moon
- Every chest patch is unique, like a fingerprint
- Moon bears can walk upright for long distances
- They can reach speeds of 25-30km/hr
- NOT SO FUN: Moon bears are commonly used in bear bile farms & circus acts

THE BEAR BASICS

Sun bear or Malayan sun bear (*Helarctos malayanus*)

APPEARANCE

- Sun bears have a short, sleek black coat with yellowish fur around the eyes & muzzle & a crescent-shaped chest mark
- The ears are small & round
- They have long, sharp sickle shaped claws & large inward turning front paws, great for climbing
- They have the longest tongue of all bears - it can extend over 30cm

SIZE

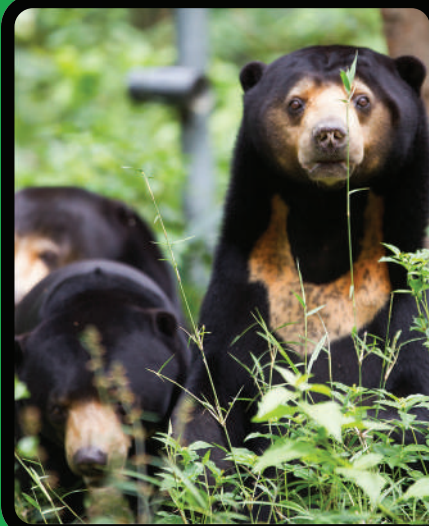
- Sun bears are the smallest bear species
- Standing on their hind legs, adult male sun bears can stand up to 145cm, or just under 5 foot tall
- Adult males can weigh from 40-90kg but are typically 50-70kg
- Adult females can weigh from 25-70kg but are typically 40-60kg

DIET

- Sun bears are omnivores, feeding primarily on termites, ants, beetle larvae, bee larvae & honey, as well as a large variety of fruits, especially figs
- Occasionally they feed on shoots of certain palms and some species of flowers, but otherwise vegetative matter is rare in their diet

DISTRIBUTION & HABITAT

- Sun bears are found in 11 countries throughout SE Asia - Bangladesh, Brunei, China, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam
- They prefer to live in undisturbed forests
- With a year round supply of food in warm climates, they have no need to hibernate



STATUS & THREATS

- An endangered species, it is classed as '**Vulnerable**' on the IUCN Red List (high risk of extinction in the wild)
- Threats include habitat loss; poaching for illegal wildlife trade (parts and traditional medicine), wire snare traps left by hunters, selling bear cubs into the exotic 'pet' trade & human-bear conflicts

BEHAVIOUR

- Sun bears spend lots of time in trees, making them the most arboreal bear species
- A keystone species, they disperse seeds, dig & break open logs, helping the nutrient cycle & creating homes for other species
- They can see in colour but smell is their strongest sense (2-3,000 times more powerful than humans)

REPRODUCTION

- Unlike other bear species, sun bears reproduce all year
- Mothers have 1-2 tiny cubs, (around 325gm) which are blind & hairless with almost transparent skin
- Cubs spend 2-3 years with their mothers
- Lifespan is believed to be 15-25 years
- Sun bears are solitary in the wild

FUN FACTS

- The 'sun' in sun bear refers to the hot equatorial sun where they live (not the chest patch)
- Their canine teeth are the same size as a polar bear's
- Sun bears build 'nests' in trees and often sleep in them
- Sun bears are also known as 'honey' bears, due to their love of honey
- Every chest patch is unique, like a fingerprint