

The bear *Ursus arctos*

Today, between 1,600 and 2,800 bears roam Swedish lands. The bear is primarily found in coniferous forest environments, but part of the Swedish bear tribe lives in the rich valleys of the mountains.

The bear hibernates during the winter. In the forest, the hibernation spot is usually dug into a large old abandoned ant hill, but it can also be dug into a gravel slope. Natural cavities under rocks or in crevices are also used, and it happens that the bear just prepares a bed of twigs and moss directly on the ground in a protective forest.

Normally, the bear is in hibernation from the end of October to the beginning of April or May. In hibernation, it does not eat at all, but survives on its fat reserves. It can burn up to half its weight during the time it is in hibernation. It is during this time that the young are born. The female bear gives birth to her cubs already in January. Then they are not much bigger than a guinea pig. The number of cubs varies from one to four, and they follow their mother for up to 2.5 years.

Among the favorite dishes you will find plants such as blueberries and crowberries, but also lingonberries, gooseberries, cranberries, and rowan berries are appreciated.

Some American researchers studied a brown bear that ate 184,000 blueberries in one day. If you're lucky, you can see how the bear grazes berries on the mountain slopes in autumn. In terms of energy, a fifth of the bear's food actually consists of ants, ant larvae, and ant pupae. Meat of various kinds makes up about a quarter of the diet. It is mostly moose and reindeer calves, or preferably carcasses of already dead animals.

The spillage looks quite different depending on what the bear has eaten, but it is always impressively large "sausages" or piles it leaves behind. In late summer and autumn when the berries have ripened, it is clearly visible in the droppings, which are then loose and filled with berries. If, on the other hand, it has eaten meat, the droppings look more like a coarse, black sausage, filled with hair scraps.

The bear has very large feet with substantial pads and five toes on each foot. Each toe has a strong claw that cannot be retracted. The gait is limping but in full gallop it can be astonishingly fast over shorter distances. The world's fastest man would have 30 meters to go to the finish line in a 100-meter race when the bear crossed the finish line.

It is therefore not a good idea to try to run away from a bear. If you see a bear, make yourself known by talking, shouting, singing or rattling something. Then the bear knows where you are and can retreat in peace.

When the bear stands up on its hind legs, it is not threatening behavior but a way for the bear to see, hear, and smell better. It simply wants to know more about what is in their surroundings.