

Black bears roam in and around Crystal River Ranch, particularly spring through summer months.

Important: To help prevent bears from visiting backyard bird feeders, do not use suet. Keep all garbage secured, keep barbeque grills clean, and do not leave pet food outdoors. This helps prevent property damage and protects our bears by preventing them from becoming nuisance animals that are habituated to human-related foods.

Smelling Experts: Bears are considered to have the best sense of smell of any animal on earth. For example, the average dog's sense of smell is 100 times better than humans. A blood hound is 300 times better. A bear's sense of smell is 7 times better than a blood hound or 2,100 times better than a human.

Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*)

Description:

Large mammal with powerful limbs, a small head, and small, rounded ears. Female black bears weigh 125-150 pounds, whereas adult males are larger, typically weighing 200-250 lbs. Black bears have several color phases; most in the northeast are all black with a brown or tan muzzle. Some individuals have a small, white chest patch, called a blaze. Black bears have five toes with well-developed claws on each foot. They walk on the soles of their feet, just like humans.



Habits and Habitat

Black bears change their diet seasonally, taking advantage of available foods. When they emerge from their den in spring, black bears eat grasses and other newly emerged succulent plants. In summer they shift to more nutritious foods including berries, fruits, roots, blossoms and insects. Hard mast -- beechnuts, acorns, and hickory nuts -- are the staple fall food source. **When natural foods are not abundant, black bears will seek alternative foods such as agricultural crops, bees from commercial hives, garbage, suet and sometimes livestock.**



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Black bears inhabit forested areas with thick understory vegetation. Wetlands and riparian areas are important components of their habitat. Optimal habitat typically includes large tracts of forest with little human disturbance.

Black bears are not true hibernators as they can be roused from their winter sleep. During deep, winter sleep, their heart rate and breathing drops 50-60 percent, body temperature drops by 7-8 degrees, and they lose a quarter of their weight. Black bears usually den in brush piles, logging slash or hollow trees, under a fallen tree or under rock outcrops. Typically, winter dens are 5 1/2 feet long and 2 feet high.

Black bears generally are solitary creatures. Females begin breeding at 3 to 4 years of age; most breed once every two years. Two to 4 cubs are born in late January or early February while the female is denning. The young bears remain with the female throughout the next winter and disperse the next spring. During spring, summer, and fall

bears may be active during the day, usually at dawn and dusk.

In areas with greater human interaction, bears tend to be more active at night. Adult male black bears may range up to 120 square miles, while females range over a smaller area, about 10 square miles.