

Sloth Bear

Scientific Name: *Melursus ursinus*

Class: Mammalia

Order: Carnivora

Family: Ursidae



These smaller bears are 4.5 to 5.5 feet long and weigh 175 to 310 pounds. (Females are slightly smaller) The name comes from the resemblance to the 3-toed sloth. The sloth bear has a gray-white flexible snout which acts as a vacuum cleaner in sucking up termites or grubs from trees, to the accompaniment of loud sucking and grunting sounds. A protruding lower lip and narrow extending tongue further aid his foraging activities. The black fur is long, shaggy, and often matted. There is a distinguishing white or chestnut horseshoe shaped crescent marking on the chest. The ears are relatively large; the long, curved claws make him a good climber, and, like the sloth, he can hang upside down. The snout is very mobile and the nostrils can be closed

voluntarily. The loud noises they make while feeding on termites attracts hunters, and may contribute to the decline of the species. They do not hibernate. They are thought to maintain small territories, and live as solitary individuals except when a female is caring for her young. There are fewer than 10,000 in the wild.

Range

India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka

Habitat

Lowland forests (jungles); rocky, hilly places

Gestation

6 to 7 months

Litter

1-3

Behavior

Sloth bears are easy to keep in zoos, and at one time were trained as performing bears at exhibitions. They are primarily nocturnal feeders. The loud noises they make while feeding on termites attracts hunters and may contribute to the decline of the species. They do not hibernate. They are thought to maintain small territories and live as solitary individuals except when a female is caring for her young.

Reproduction

Breeding usually takes place in May, June or July, with pairs forming for only one or two days. The mother dens for the birth, and the cubs stay in the den for 2 or 3 months. After emerging from the den, they ride on the mother's back for a time. They are weaned in 9 months but stay with the mother for 2 or 3 years, until almost fully grown.

Wild Diet

Honey and fruit as well as ants and termites, which they can locate by smell.