American Black Bear

Black Bear | *Ursus americanus Pallas, 1780*



[RIPARIAN SCENE]

At the salmon *crossing*

In a clear British Columbia stream, an American black bear pauses among mossy boulders as spawning salmon move below. Tall pointed ears, a straight facial profile, and a pale muzzle distinguish this adaptable bear of forests, valleys, and riparian corridors.

[AUTUMN HYPERPHAGIA]

Late summer and autumn salmon runs provide rich food. Bears may feed intensively before denning, while spring diets rely more on sedges, skunk cabbage, and fresh shoots.

[FORESTS AND STREAMSIDES]

Black bears occur across British Columbia, from coastal temperate rainforest and salmon-bearing watersheds to interior montane forests, wetlands, berry patches, and some subalpine edges.

[BEAR SMART COEXISTENCE]

Secure garbage, fruit, birdseed, and pet food. Give bears space, keep dogs leashed near streams, and never approach cubs or a feeding animal.

FIELD NOTES

[RECOGNIZE IT]

Look for tall pointed ears, a straight Roman-nosed profile, and no shoulder hump. Coat colour varies, but many BC bears show black fur with a pale muzzle.

[NUTRIENT MOVER]

By carrying salmon carcasses into nearby forest, black bears transfer marine nutrients into riparian soils, helping support trees, shrubs, insects, and other wildlife.

[ON THE TRAIL]

Tracks show five toes and curved claws. If you meet a bear, stay calm, speak steadily, back away slowly, and be ready with bear spray.

Sources: BC Parks; BC CDC; BC MELP; DFO; WildSafeBC