

GRIZZLY BEAR OR BLACK BEAR?

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE

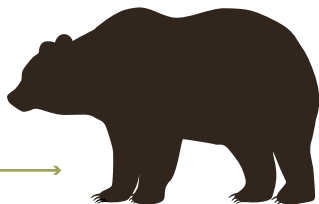


PHYSICAL CLUES:

- Short, wideset ears
- Round face
- Shoulder hump (this is actually a muscle)

- Short, stepped facial profile

- Long, pale claws



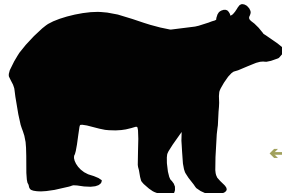
GRIZZLY BEAR *URSUS ARCTOS*

- Flat shoulder
- Rump is highest point of body

- Tall ears
- Slender face

- Straight facial profile, light muzzle

- Short, dark claws



BLACK BEAR *URSUS AMERICANUS*

GRIZZLY BEAR OR BLACK BEAR?

KNOW THE DIFFERENCE



ENVIRONMENTAL AND BEHAVIOURAL CLUES:

- When startled, likely to stand his/her ground or bluff charge
- Prefers open meadows
- Track shows front paw toes in almost a straight line



GRIZZLY BEAR TRACK *URSUS ARCTOS*

- When startled, likely to run away or climb a tree
- Prefer forested areas
- Track shows front paw toes in a very curved line



BLACK BEAR TRACK *URSUS AMERICANUS*

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**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

GRIZZLY BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Short round ears
- Round face

This bear definitely doesn't have typical colouring for a grizzly, but blondes are not that rare. Because she is a girl, her face is more slender, not as boxy as a male's. Notice that the ears are not as tall as a black bear's.



Photo © Sylvia Dolson

**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

BLACK BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Tall ears
- Light muzzle

This dark brown bear is actually a black bear. One might get confused by the hackles being blown up in the wind - this is not a hump. Black bears don't have humps. The highest part along the back of a black bear, when standing on flat ground, is generally the rump.

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WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?

ANSWER:

GRIZZLY BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Long pale claws
- Shoulder hump
- Wide-set ears

Grizzly bears come in cinnamon, too! Check out the hump on the shoulder and the length and colour of the front claws – these are definite clues as to species. This bear is a female, so the face is quite slender.



Photo © Nikolai Zinoviev

**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

GRIZZLY BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Long pale claws
- Short, wideset ears

Tiny grizzly cubs are a bit harder to tell from black bears. This bear even has a lighter coloured muzzle, which is very common to black bears. The claws are quite long though even for a young cub, and the ears are shorter and further apart than a black bear's.



**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

BLACK BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Straight facial profile
- Tall ears
- V-shaped chest patch

During hibernation, bears often lose fur from around their eyes due to mites eating it during the winter. The photo was taken just after this adult female black bear emerged from the den. It may give the bear the appearance of a grizzly, but check out the ear size – they are much taller than a grizzly's. You can also see a v-shaped patch on her chest.

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**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

GRIZZLY BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Shoulder hump

This grizzly is quite dark in colour, but is not quite black. It's easy to see the grizzly's big hump here. The hump is a large muscle that gets bigger and stronger from lots of digging – digging for plant bulbs, little critters, and digging dens.



Photo © Sylvia Dolson

**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

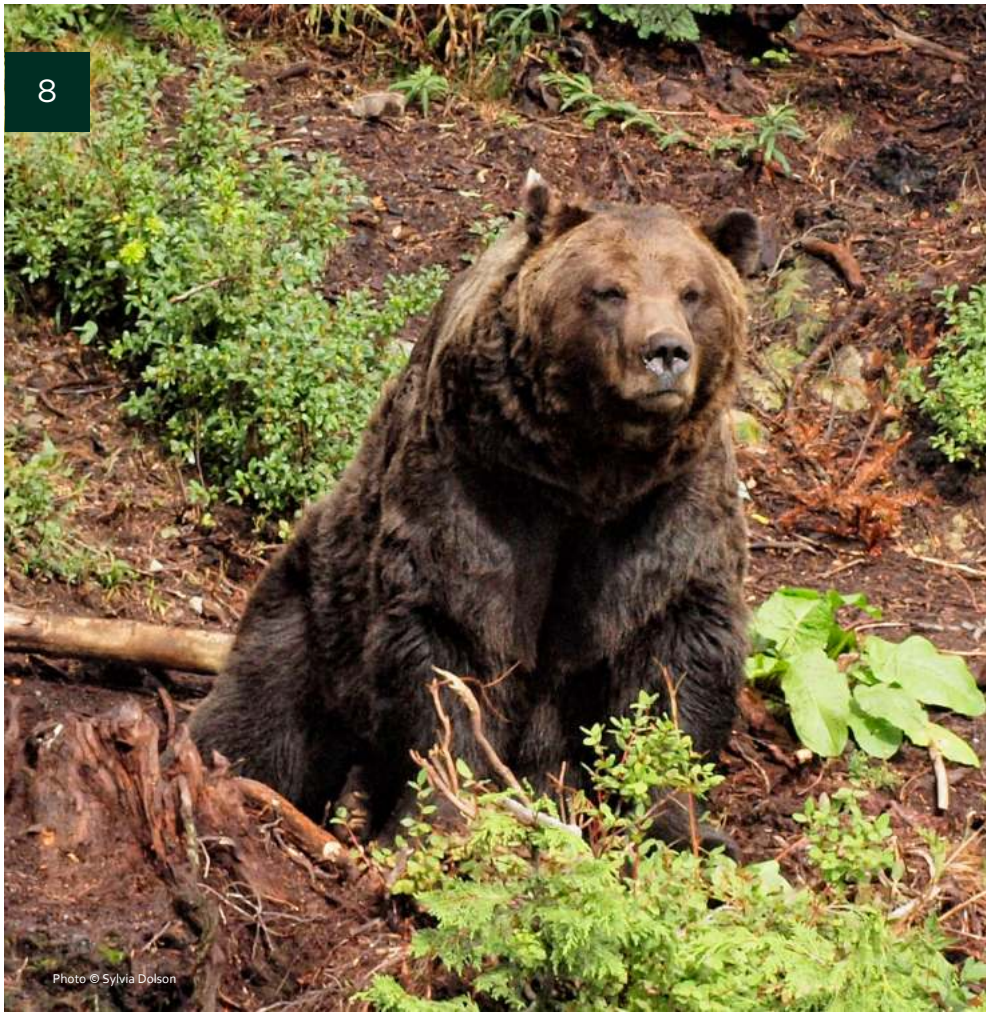
GRIZZLY BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Short, wideset ears
- Round face

This lovely cinnamon grizzly is fishing. When the fur is wet, the face looks a little different. But, again, the ears are shorter and further apart. There are not as many clues when you can't see the bear's full body.



WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?

ANSWER:

GRIZZLY BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Short, wideset ears
- Round face
- Very large size

That's a big bear. At this angle, it's difficult to see a hump, but the width of his face and neck and his sheer size alone indicates that he's a grizzly.



Photo © Jim Lawrence, Kootenay Reflections

**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

GRIZZLY BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Shoulder hump
- Long, pale claws
- Silver-tipped fur

Now that's a big hump! Gotta be a grizzly bear. And look at those claws – long and light in colour. Not much confusion with this bear. He even has the typical grizzled appearance with silver-tipped fur that is the reason for his namesake.



Photo © Sylvia Dolson

**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

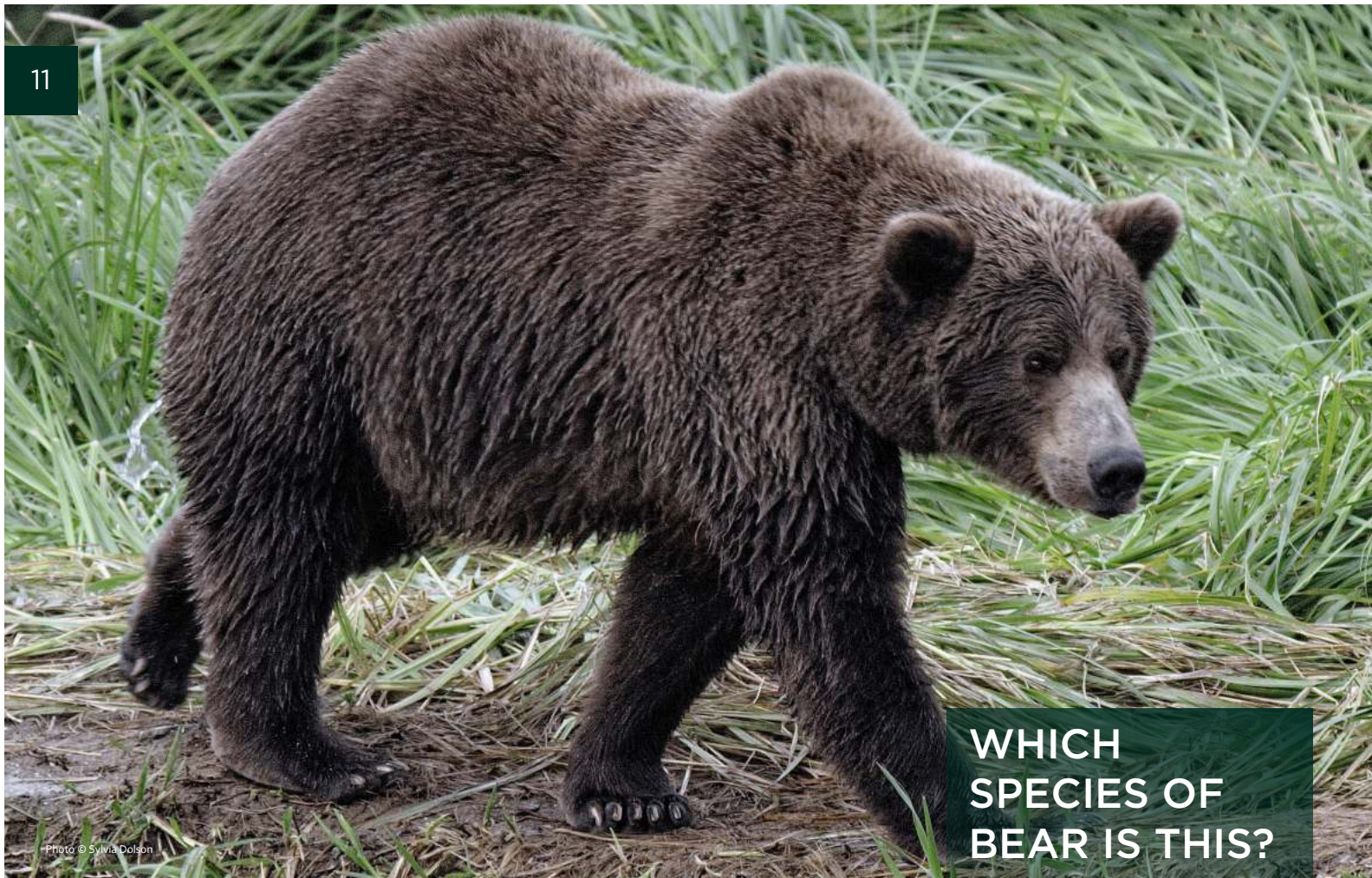
BLACK BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Tall ears
- Light muzzle

This pretty girl is very young. The wind is blowing her hackles up, but she does not have a hump. The light-coloured muzzle, tall ears and facial shape are the give-aways that she's a black bear.



WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?

ANSWER:

GRIZZLY BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Shoulder hump
- Long, pale claws
- Short, wideset ears

This bear has a big hump and long claws. His ears look a bit bigger than most grizzly bears, but apart from that he is a pretty typical grizzly.



Photo © Sylvia Dolson

**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

GRIZZLY BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Wideset ears

This young bear has really big ears for a grizzly; s/he hasn't quite grown into them yet. Like puppies, younger bears have bigger ears. Because of the ear size you may think s/he's a black bear, but they are very wideset which indicates s/he is a grizzly.

It's hard to tell whether this one is a boy or a girl, at this younger age. They may be a female with such a slender face.



**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

BLACK BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Short claws
- Straight facial profile

Since we can't see the bear's body, we have to look at their ears and facial profile, but look at those claws – they are way too small for a grizzly bear. Black bear front claws are usually sharply curved, dark in colour and about 2.5 – 5 cm long, while a grizzly's front claws are lighter in colour and 5 – 10 cm long. Black bear claws are not as sharp as grizzly's either — they are usually quite worn down and dull. Grizzlies need sharp claws to hold down their prey (mammals and fish).



**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

BLACK BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Light muzzle
- V-shaped chest patch

These three tiny cubs were born in January of the same year. This photo was taken in May, so they are only about four months old. While two of the cubs are light brown in colour, they can also have siblings that are a different colour, like black.

It's very hard for many people to tell little black bear cubs from grizzly cubs, but biologists know the difference. One of the distinguishing characteristics is the V-shaped chest patch that is often found on black bears.

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Photo © Sylvia Dolson

WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?

ANSWER:

BLACK BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Dark, curved claws
- Straight facial profile
- Light muzzle

This male brown phase black bear is very large in size, perhaps confusing him with a grizzly bear. The tell-tale signs to distinguish this bear from a grizzly are: the straighter more Roman-nosed facial profile, big ears, and small claws. Also, he has a lighter-coloured muzzle which is often seen on black bears.



**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

BLACK BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- No shoulder hump
- Light muzzle
- Straight facial profile

A black bear mother and her cub-of-the-year (COY) in May. The brown colour, and especially the light colour of the cub could confuse them with grizzly bears. But, check the face shape... it looks more like a dog's face from the side, helping to identify her as a black bear. She is also lacking a hump.



**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

BLACK BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Tall ears
- Light muzzle

This female black bear, while she is black, may be confused with a grizzly because her hackles have been blown up by the wind. However it's important to make note of her tall ears and light-coloured muzzle to be able to identify her as a black bear.



**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

GRIZZLY BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Shoulder hump
- Long, pale claws
- Silver-tipped fur
- Stepped facial profile

Another typical grizzly bear. It's hard to mis-identify this guy. Yes, he's a male. Long claws. You can see a lighter coloured saddle around his neck; many interior grizzlies wear this in BC.



**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

BLACK BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Tall ears
- V-shaped chest patch

This young female black bear is molting. The photo was taken in the early spring and she is still losing her long winter guard hairs. It almost makes her look like she has a grizzled appearance. She is, however, a cinnamon phase black bear.

Young bears have big ears, and in this case, the tall ears are a definite give-away that she is a black bear. Her face shape and chest patch help identify her as a black bear as well.



**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

BLACK BEAR



KEY CLUES:

- Light muzzle
- Tall ears
- Straight facial profile

This male black bear is likely around 350 kg, tipping the scales on average size for a black bear. But don't let that fool you. His light muzzle, tall ears and straight facial profile identify him as a black bear.



Photo © Nickolay Lamm

Nickolay Lamm / Business Insider

**WHICH
SPECIES OF
BEAR IS THIS?**

ANSWER:

HYBRID

KEY CLUES:

- Stepped facial profile

Sometimes, where their ranges overlap, grizzlies mate with polar bears and a rare hybrid is born.

Canadian Wildlife officials have suggested calling the urside crossbreed a “Nanulak,” taken from the Inuit names for polar bear (Nanuk) and grizzly bear (Aklak). By another naming convention, the name of the sire would be ordered first, such that the offspring of a male polar bear and a female grizzly would be a “pizzly bear,” while the offspring of a male grizzly and a female polar bear would be a “grolar bear.”