

LARGE MAMMALS



Carnivores

Wolf (*Canis lupus*)

Physical Characteristics: ranges in color from white, to black, to gray, to brown . The wolf can be as long as 122 cm (around four feet) from head to the end of their body, with their tail measuring up to 48 cm (112 feet). They stand to about 71 cm (almost 28 inches) from their shoulders to the ground. Wolves hold their tails high while running, and their ears are smaller and more rounded than those of a coyote. The wolf's nose pad measures over 25 mm (just under an inch) and the color of their eyes is a greenish orange.

Distribution. Historically, the gray wolf was distributed throughout North America in any habitat that supported ungulate populations.

Approximately 60,000 to 70,000 wolves occupied the region in the early 1900s. Their current distribution is limited to the northern portions of the continent as well as patchy distributions within the United States.

Habitat requirements. Wolf packs maintain year-round territories that range from 125 to 4312 square km (48 to 1664 square miles), preferring unroaded forested areas that contain large numbers of ungulates.

Food habitats. The main source of prey for wolves is ungulates like deer, elk, caribou, moose, bison, and musk oxen. They'll also kill livestock on occasion.



Puma (*Puma concolor* or *Felis concolor*)

Physical Characteristics: Pumas are the second largest cat in North America. Their bodies are slender and their heads are relatively compact, with heavy limbs and tails that are about a third of their body length. Adult pumas tend to be pretty uniform in color, which ranges from brownish to gray. Black patches can be seen on the tip of their tails and on the backs of their ears. Males weigh about 80 kg (176 pounds) and are about one and a half times heavier than females, that weigh about 30 kg (66 pounds).

Distribution. At one time, the puma had the largest geographic range of any land mammal in the Western Hemisphere, stretching from northern British Columbia to South America. However, combinations of hunting and habitat loss following settlement by European immigrants have drastically reduced the number of pumas.

Habitat requirements. pumas like areas where the vegetation or topography are favorable for hunting prey like deer. Also important is adequate cover to protect newborn cubs. Some habitats that pumas use in the western United States include such trees as mixed conifer, pinyon-juniper, and mixed aspen. Most pumas avoid open areas like agricultural fields or flat shrublands. The endangered Florida Panther is most often associated with dense hardwood hammock and also pine flatwoods

Food habitats. Deer are the most important component of the puma's diet. This large cat will also eat elk, moose, and smaller prey such as rabbits and porcupines.



Jaguar (*Panthera onca*)

Physical Characteristics: They have stout compact bodies with a large head, short rounded ears, and a short tail. Their large feet have five retractable claws on the front paws, and four claws on the back paws. Their jaws hold 30 teeth. Males weigh up to 120 kg (264 pounds) and are 10-20% larger than females.

The color of the jaguar coat is pale to reddish yellow, with black roselike circular markings on its back and sides. Most of these circular markings include one or more black spots of varying size on top of a background generally darker than the coat color. The underside and jaws and ears are whitish, with different sized scattered black spots. The face and neck have the most spots, the tail is spotted, and the lower third of the tail has black rings.

Distribution. Historically, the jaguar came to North and South America from Eurasia over two million years ago and was found from Arizona down to the bottom tip of South America. The jaguar is extremely rare in the United States today, but has been seen in the Southwest deserts of Arizona and New Mexico.

Habitat requirements. The jaguar is an excellent swimmer and aquatic hunter, although it prefers dense tropical vegetation and permanent water resources. However, they're also found in arid habitats like the Chihuahuan and northern Sonoran Deserts. Because of their secretive solitary behavior, few people have ever even seen jaguars in the wild.

Food habits. Jaguars, like pumas, eat over 85 different types of animals, such as small rodents, peccaries (small piglike animals), large ungulates, large reptiles, small reptiles, large fish, and small fish. They kill by biting the base of their prey's skull or by puncturing their prey's braincase.



Black Bear (*Ursus americanus*)

Physical Characteristics: These are shy, intelligent bears that can race as fast as 50 km (31 miles) per hour. Unlike grizzlies, black bears can climb—but only on the trunks and branches of big trees, since their average weight is 115 kg (253 pounds). They're 2 m (6'10") long and 75 cm (almost 2'10") tall at the shoulder when they're on all fours. Black bears aren't always black. They generally have brown faces and are shiny black elsewhere, but they can also be brown, tan, cinnamon with a white throat patch, or even "blue" in Glacier Bay

Distribution. Black bears are found in many different parts of North America. They range from Alaska through Canada, and southward into the United States in both the Eastern and Western mountains. Only very limited numbers live along the Gulf Coast from Louisiana to Florida.

Habitat requirements. Black bears live in small family groups, and each family needs a large home range. They prefer forests, rough, rocky country, and swamps. Black bears have five basic needs: escape cover, fall sources of fruits and nuts, spring and summer feeding areas, winter denning habitat, and most important, lots of space.

Food habits. Although black bears are omnivores, meaning that they eat both plants and animals, they primarily eat plants and fruits. They eat insects, nuts, fruits, roots, and berries. Actually, they'll try almost anything. They also eat rodents, carrion (dead animals), fawns, rabbits, and other small game.



Grizzly Bear (*Ursus arctos horribilis*)

Physical Characteristics: Some bear experts recognize as many as 74 different species of grizzly bear, while others recognize only one. For example, it's thought that the Kodiak bears of Afognak, Kodiak, and the Shuyak Islands are a form of grizzly, and there's a good possibility that the huge Alaskan brown bears may be, too.

Distribution. Historically, the grizzly was found throughout the western United States all the way down into northern Mexico. Its current distribution is greatly restricted, and it's now found in less than half of its historical range. Small populations are still found in the Rocky Mountains in areas like Yellowstone National Park.

Habitat requirements. The grizzly bear is relatively adaptable and found in a variety of habitats, but is most often found in forests. Its biggest need is very large tracts of undeveloped land. However, such land is rapidly disappearing.

Food habitats. Grizzlies love fish, especially spawning salmon, but as with black bears, most of their diet is made up of plants rather than meats. When they find them, grizzlies dig up ground squirrels and mice. They eat carrion too, even their own kind. But most of their diet is grass and berries. They uproot whole bushes and eat them. But they don't go after honey very often, since it's often in high trees. Grizzlies can't climb—their claws are stiff and huge, and trees just aren't strong enough to support them.



Polar Bear (*Ursus thalarctos maritimus*)

Physical characteristics: it's white all over and huge. The head of a polar bear is smaller than a grizzly's; they also have a longer neck and don't have the shoulder hump. Polar bear claws are shorter and sharper, and their paws are built for swimming. Males are bigger than females and vary in weight from 300–500 kg (661–1102 pounds).

Distribution. Polar bears are found in the North Pole region and currently occupy nearly all of their historic range. In North America, the bears inhabit both the west and east coast of the Northwest Territories.

Habitat requirements. Polar bears are most often found around sea ice. They also inhabit rocky shores and islands.

Food habits. This big animal eats almost entirely meat, and most of the meat they eat is seal. They'll also scavenge or feed upon beluga whales, narwhals, and walruses.



Artiodactyla

Collared Peccary (*Dicotyles tajacu* or *Tayassu tajacu*)

Physical Characteristics: The collared peccary is a small, gray, piglike animal with a large, sloping head, coarse, dense coat, and very slim legs. They have small bodies, but their heads are relatively large. Their collar is a pale or white band that partially or completely surrounds the neck. The peccary has no tail, and its short tusks curve down, rather than up and outward. Boars (males) average about 27 kg (59 pounds), and sows (females) are 18–20 kg (39–44 pounds).

Distribution. Peccaries are found in North, Central and South America, from Paraguay to Arizona and Texas.

Habitat requirements. Specific habitat requirements haven't been identified for this species, but it's found in a variety of habitats in the Southwest, from the Sonoran and Chihuahuan deserts to scrub oak, to tropical forests in Central and South America. Peccaries prefer dense woody cover in areas with abundant food resources.

Food habits. The peccary eats a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, and succulent plants. Prickly pear and other cacti are often eaten, and they also like mesquite berries. Peccaries use their snouts to dig for vegetables, roots, grubs, snakes, and small animals.



Bison (Bison bison)

Identification. Bison are huge animals weighing 675–800 kg (1488–1763 pounds). Their shoulders rise to a hump 2 m (612 feet) off the ground, considerably above their huge rough heads with relatively small, curved horns. Their heads, shoulders, and forelegs are covered with thick, rough hair. But the back slopes down into smooth, smallish, velvety hind legs and a little, whiplike tufted tail.

Distribution. Historically, bison roamed throughout most of the United States. Their range shrunk greatly during the 1900s. Today, there are only some free-ranging herds in Yellowstone National Park area and in the Northwest Territories.

Habitat requirements. The basic needs of bison are lots of open space full of grasses and surface water. They like to use scratching posts (small rough trees or fence posts) during the summer, but this isn't an essential requirement.

Food habitats. Bison eat only grasses and sedges. They eat more sedge in mountain regions like Yellowstone National Park.

