

BEARS!

**TEACHER'S
GUIDE**

By Dawn Bayes

BEARS!

13 Minutes, 1990

A film by Daniel Zatz

Distributed by Bullfrog Films, Oley, PA 19547

INTRODUCTION

The grizzly bear is one of the most magnificent, and yet most misunderstood animals living today. Many historical and folk stories portray grizzly bears as dangerous, unpredictable animals that may randomly attack humans for no good reason. In truth, grizzly bears have attacked humans. However, most of these attacks are attributed to provocation by careless people, who either surprised or provoked a frightened bear, or carried unsealed food with them while backpacking or camping. Nevertheless, grizzly bears have been killed by the thousands, both by trophy hunters who believe that shooting “mean old” grizzly bears is a sign of bravery, and by others who kill bears simply because they are too afraid of them to try and live peaceably with them.

BEARS! reveals the great discrepancy between the vicious, dangerous creatures of myths and folk tales, and the true nature of these beautiful and unobtrusive animals who prefer to avoid people rather than confront them. Showing scenes of sows teaching their cubs how to fish in the river, and cubs playing and resting with their mother, BEARS! illustrates what grizzly bears need to live in the wilderness, from what they eat, to how they survive through the long cold winter. While watching BEARS!, young people will learn how grizzly bears have been mistreated and misunderstood in the past, and how we can treat them better in the future.

DID YOU KNOW THAT...

Bear Facts

- A male grizzly usually weighs between 350 and 800 pounds, though once in a while they can weigh up to 1000 pounds.
- Grizzly bears living near the ocean are sometimes called “brown bears” though they are really the same species.
- The coat of a grizzly bear can be many different colors - dark brown, brown, black, cinnamon, and even yellow or almost white.
- Grizzly bears are related to black bears, which also live in North America. One way to tell the difference between them is to look at their backs - grizzlies have a hump at the top of their back, near the neck. Black bears don't.
- Grizzly bears used to live throughout the western half of the United States, ranging all the way down into Mexico and throughout Canada and Alaska.
- Today in the United States, grizzlies are only found in northwestern Montana, northern Idaho, Yellowstone Park in Wyoming, and in Alaska. They still range throughout many parts of Canada. The grizzly bear is listed as an endangered species south of the Canadian border.
- Grizzly bears eat mostly plant foods like wild berries, nuts, grasses and leaves. They do eat some meat whenever they can get it, but most of the meat they eat is either salmon from the river, or other animals that are already dead when they find them.

- Grizzlies are very fast. Some grizzlies have been clocked at speeds of up to 40 miles per hour.

HIBERNATING AND CUBS

- Grizzly bears hibernate for up to 6 months every year. They sleep all winter inside a den that they dig themselves, and this den keeps them warm and protected throughout the cold winter.
- Grizzly bears eat as much as they can during the summer and fall in order to store up enough fat to survive the winter hibernation without eating (as long as six months without food). Sometimes if a bear gets very hungry during the winter, it will leave its den to look for food.
- When grizzly bears hibernate, their heart rate slows down (from 40 beats per minute, to 8 or 10 beats per minute) and their breathing slows down until they take in only half their usual amount of oxygen. This way, they don't use up as much energy, and the fat that they built up during autumn will last through the winter.
- Grizzly bear cubs are born during the winter inside the den. The mother wakes up long enough to give birth to the cubs - usually 2 cubs, but sometimes 1 or as many as 4. Then they all live crowded together in the den until springtime.
- After grizzly bear cubs are born, they usually stay with their mothers for two years before they are ready to go out on their own.
- Grizzly bear mothers can be more dangerous than other grizzly bears because they are extremely protective of their cubs. A mother grizzly bear may attack anything that tries to hurt her cubs, even another grizzly bear that is much bigger than she is.

MYTHS

- When a grizzly bear stands up on its hind legs, it isn't so it can attack. It stands so it can get a better idea of the kind of danger it is facing by sniffing the air. A grizzly's sense of smell is very good - much better than its eyesight. There is an old saying: "One day a leaf fell from a tree. The deer heard it, the eagle saw it, and the bear smelled it."
- In most cases, a grizzly bear charge directed at a person or other animal will not result in an attack. Often this is just a bluff charge, and the bear will stop short without actually attacking.
- A grizzly can't really snarl the way the stuffed grizzly bear in the museum did. A bear can't snarl its lips the way people can, because its mouth is built differently than ours. The bear in the museum was stuffed by people and its mouth was forced unnaturally into that position so that it would look dangerous. Hunters like it this way because then they feel exceptionally brave.

QUESTIONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

(along with some discussion ideas)

WILD ANIMALS

- What do wild grizzly bears need in order to live in the wild?
 - *lots of room to roam*
 - *plenty of food for themselves and their cubs*
 - *a warm den to live in during the winter*
 - *cubs need their mothers to take care of them, protect them, and teach them how to take care of themselves.*

- What things that grizzly bears need are the same things that people need to be happy and healthy?
 - *plenty of food*
 - *a warm place to live*
 - *children need a parent to take care of them and teach them.*
- Should you ever get close to a grizzly bear or other wild animal that you don't know?
 - *Never. Wild animals can be dangerous when they are frightened or surprised by a person.*
- Why do you think the grizzly bears in the film weren't afraid of the people who were taking their pictures?
 - *because the people stayed so far away from the bears, that the bears felt safe.*
 - *the photographers that take pictures of grizzly bears, like the ones in the film, can get pictures that look very close up. That's because they have special cameras and lenses that "zoom in" on the bears from very far away.*
 - *also, bears that live in some parts of Alaska are protected, and most of them have never been hunted or hurt by people, so they aren't as afraid of people as grizzlies in other places are.*
- What other wild animals besides grizzly bears did you see in the film?
 - *bald eagles, caribou, wolves, salmon, seagulls.*

VALUES

- Why did the grandfather in the film finally stop shooting grizzly bears?
 - *because after he killed the mother bear, he realized that her cubs would have to grow up alone, and he didn't want that to happen to anymore bears.*
- How did you feel when the grandfather told this story? Were you sad? angry? afraid?
- How does the grandfather hunt for grizzlies now?
 - *he uses a camera and takes their picture.*
- Do you think it's better to shoot animals with guns or cameras?
- What do hunters do with a grizzly bear after they shoot them?
 - *sometimes they stuff them, sometimes they make rugs out of them.*
- Do you think a picture of a grizzly bear is better than a bearskin rug or a stuffed bear? Why?
 - *because taking a picture of a bear is one way to take the bear home with you, without having to kill the bear or take it away from its home and family.*
- Do you think the bear in the museum looked dangerous? How did the real bears in Alaska look different from the bear in the museum?
 - *the grizzly bear in the museum looked angry, fierce and dangerous, while the bears in the film played with each other, and spent a lot of time just looking for food.*

MOTHERS AND CUBS

- Why do you think a mother grizzly bear would be especially afraid of people?
 - *because she has cubs to protect. If other animals or people get close to her cubs, she might attack them because she wants to keep her cubs safe.*
- What do you think the cubs in the film learned from watching their mother?
 - *how to fish in the river*
 - *how to find other kinds of food*
- What other animal in the film did you see feeding her children?
 - *a bald eagle feeding her chicks in the nest*
- What else did the mother grizzly bear in the film do with her cubs besides teach them to find food?
 - *she played with her cubs, and they rested together.*

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

- What are some reasons why there are only a small number of grizzly bears left in the world?
 - *hunters killed many of them*
 - *more and more cities are being built in places where grizzly bears used to live*
 - *many people killed bears because they thought bears were too dangerous and shouldn't be allowed to live.*
- Why do grizzly bears hibernate every winter?
 - *Because when it gets cold in the winter, there isn't very much food for the bears to eat. If they sleep through the cold weather, they won't get hungry, and by the time they wake up in the spring, there is once again lots of food for them to eat.*

DO YOU REMEMBER...

the chorus of the grizzly bear song?

*Oh mama bear, oh baby bear
fishing in the stream,
oh mama bear, oh baby bear,
are you really so mean?*

*Eatin' and tumblin' and fillin' your day
with all sorts of fun and play,
oh mama bear, oh baby bear,
you're grizzlies so free.*

RELATED BULLFROG FILMS

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8 min. Pre-K - Grade 3

Children learn about slugs. Produced by Daniel Zatz.

Look Again Series

Six 10 min. films Grades K - 6

Non-verbal stories explore nature - in human settings, habitat, seasons, water cycle, patterns, night, magic.

Polar Bear

11 min. Grades 2 - 8

Wildlife services study polar bear habitat needs.
By Owl/TV.

Sleeping Bears

8 min. Grades 2 - 8

A study of black bears and their habitation.
By Owl/TV.



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