

ANDEAN (SPECTACLED) BEAR

*Kingdom: Animalia Phylum: Chordata Class: Mammalia Order: Carnivora Family: Ursidae
Tremarctos ornatus*

Description: These black to blackish brown bears are noted for the white marks around their eyes that resemble spectacles or glasses that can extend from the cheeks to the chest.

Length: 4.5-6 feet

Weight: 200-350 pounds

Habitat: Mountainous regions of tropical cloud forests, high-altitude savanna, scrublands and humid forests.

Distribution: Western Venezuela, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, western Bolivia and Panama.

Diet: Mostly herbivorous: eats roots, fruits, berries, leaves, and sometimes insects, rodents and carrion

Life Span: 20 years

Status: The Andean bear is listed as vulnerable in the IUCN Red Data Book and as an Appendix I species under CITES. Its numbers in the wild are depleted by hunting and loss of habitat. Increased human populations, agriculture, road building and ineffective conservation practices have contributed to this species decline in the wild.

Special Characteristics:

- The spectacle markings aid in individual recognition.
- Long, curved claws are used for digging in the soil and tearing into logs for food.
- Excellent sense of smell
- Nocturnal and crepuscular.
- Does not truly hibernate, but will den up in inclement weather.
- The Andean bear is an excellent tree climber and forages in the trees.
- It is most often found in what is called the cloud forest, a lush, misty ecosystem of the Andes Mountains.
- The spectacled bear is thought to play a vital role in the forest by scattering seeds through its droppings, a function called seed dispersal.
- When feeding in fruit trees the spectacled bear will bend back many branches forming a "nest" that will serve as a feeding platform and a daytime refuge.
- Its bones and fat are used for the local medicinal market and recently reports of poaching for gall bladders for the Asian market have been reported in Ecuador.
- They are the only bears to live in South America and are the largest carnivores on the continent.

Reproduction:

- Mating pairs usually stay together one or two weeks, copulating many times. While the female is in estrus, which only occurs for one to five days, the male and female go through a ritual of mock fighting and playing until the female is ready to mate
- Gestation 5-5.5 months.
- Implantation can be delayed by the female after mating so that births coincide with plentiful food supply.
- Litter size 1-3 cubs.
- Mother dens up with cubs for several months.
- Mature at 3 years.

