

# The Brown Bear

Scientific Name: *Ursus arctos*

Irish Name: Béar donn

The Brown Bear is a powerful animal. It has a large body, which is covered in a thick brown fur, a big head, four thick legs and a short tail. Its shoulder hump, which is muscle that has developed from digging, distinguishes it from other bears.

Even though brown bears are big they can move very fast when they need to. They are also good climbers.



Images courtesy of Alan Wilson www.naturesonline.com

### Dinner Time

Bears are omnivorous. As predators they are at the top of the food-chain, eating anything from fish to mice to moose. However they also eat nuts, berries, fruit, plants and roots, which in fact make up a large part of their food intake. For bears that live near the coast, salmon is an important part of their diet. They can wait by the water for a considerable amount of time, waiting for the fish to swim by and either grab them with their powerful jaws or scoop them up with their powerful claws.



The size of a brown bear varies depending on where it lives, its diet and the time of year. Bears feed heavily from spring until autumn so as to put on weight and build up body fat to help them through their winter hibernation.



### Brown Bears in Ireland

Brown bears were living in Ireland until they became extinct about 3,000 years ago. Recent studies on the bones of ancient brown bears found in Irish caves, suggest that there is a genetic link between Irish bears and polar bears.



### FACT FILE:

**Colour:** Thick brown fur.

**Length:** 2 - 3 metres.

**Weight:** 100 - 1,000 kg

**Diet:** Nuts, fruit, berries, plants & roots, as well as meat & fish.

**Habitat:** Forests and mountains in North America, Europe & Asia.

### Relatives

A male bear is called a **boar**, a female is called a **sow** and the young is called a **cub**. Cubs are born without fur and snuggle into their mother for warmth. Cubs stay with their mother for about two and a half years.

There is one species of brown bear but there are a number of sub-species, depending on where they live. For example Grizzly Bears in North America, Kodiak Brown Bears in Alaska and Eurasian Brown Bears in Europe and Asia.

