

The Bear Facts – Test Your Knowledge of the Louisiana Black Bear

In early 1992, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service listed the Louisiana black bear as threatened under provisions of the Endangered Species Act of 1973. The federal listing provides for severe penalties, both civil and criminal, for harming a bear in Louisiana, Mississippi, or East Texas.

In the past, Louisiana black bears could be found throughout the region, with the greatest numbers found in the bottomland hardwood forests associated with river basins in the lower Mississippi River Valley. As the forests gave way to the ax and plow, bear populations declined, and by 1900, bears were no longer common.

Extensive habitat loss and human exploitation are blamed for the most recent declines in bears throughout their historic range. Presently, black bears are found in core areas in the Tensas and Atchafalaya River basins in Louisiana, with small scattered populations in southeast Louisiana and western Mississippi. Biologists estimate the current population at 300 to 400 animals.

1. Louisiana Black Bears are active from:
 - A. April to November
 - B. In the wintertime
 - C. Dusk til dawn.

2. After emerging from dens in spring, bears are in a "semi-fasting" state as they continue to utilize remaining winter fat reserves. At this time they eat succulent, easy-to-digest vegetation. During the summer they eat:
 - A. Mostly berries, insects, and carrion
 - B. Snakes, fish and turtles
 - C. Pancakes and waffles

3. Bears hibernate in the winter in large hollow trees, downed logs, or in ground nests which are shallow depressions lined with vegetation. Hibernating bears show various degrees of awareness.
 - A. Bears sleep so soundly that you could touch them on the shoulder and they won't wake up.
 - B. If you get near a hibernating bear, they will wake up, but go right back to sleep.
 - C. Most bears can easily be roused if disturbed and they can be very angry when awakened.

4. Habitat loss has been the main reason for the bear's decline due to:
 - A. Reservoir construction has flooded many miles of former bottomland hardwood habitat.
 - B. many bottomlands forests have been cut and converted to agricultural areas or housing developments.
 - C. Human development – people have gradually taken over much of the bear's habitat to use for their own needs.

5. The Louisiana black bear can live to be:
- A. 10 to 12 years of age
 - B. 15 to 18 years of age
 - C. 75 years of age
6. When they give birth, female bears usually have a litter of:
- A. one to three cubs
 - B. seven or eight cubs
 - C. One dozen cubs
7. The Louisiana black bear weighs anywhere from 120 to 400 pounds. Which one of these statements is NOT true.
- A. Adult males are larger than adult females
 - B. Male bears are thinner because they swim more.
 - C. Female bears grow to about 150 to 175 pounds
8. Bears will lose their instinctive fear of humans quite easily and often become nuisances. Nuisance activities are generally more common in years when there is a shortage of natural foods. Which of the following statements is true?
- A. An amazingly acute sense of smell enables the bear to find many sources of nourishment, often garbage or pet foods.
 - B. Bears are very picky eaters and they don't eat what humans eat.
 - C. Bears never return to areas where they have found food in the past.
9. When bear-related conflicts occur, some bears are relocated to a different location, one that is far away. Which one of the following statements is false?
- A. The problem with relocation is that bears have a remarkable homing instinct, and will attempt to find their way back to familiar territory. Bears have been documented returning up to 400 miles from relocation sites.
 - B. In their attempt to locate familiar surroundings, they cross roads and highways, increasing the chances of being hit by motor vehicles, and will likely cross areas inhabited by humans, creating potentially dangerous situations for both humans and bears.
 - C. Bear relocation is almost always successful and they have a great chance for survival.
10. Which of the following answers best sums up the way YOU feel about the Louisiana black bear?
- A. Bears are not something I care about.
 - B. We should do whatever is necessary to save this wonderful creature.
 - C. We should hunt bears until they are all gone.

ANSWERS

1. Answer: A. Bears hibernate in the winter.
2. Answer: A.
3. Answer C. Don't even think about going near a hibernating bear.
4. Ha! Trick question. They are all correct!
5. Answer: C.
6. Answer: A. Females have one to three cubs, usually two, and often only one the first time around. They have their first cubs at age 3.
7. Answer B. But neither males nor females are afraid of water.
8. Answer: A.
9. Answer: C. Because of the stress and increased human interaction, relocated bears have only a 50% chance of survival.
10. Answer B. We must do whatever we can to protect creatures around us.