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41.American black bears  
American black bears appear in a variety of colors despite their name. In the eastern part of their range, most of these brown, red, or even yellow coats. To the north, the black bear is actually gray or white in color. Even in the same litter, both brown and black furred bears may be born. Black bears are the smallest of all American bears, ranging in length from five to six feet, weighing from three hundred to five hundred pounds. Their eyes and ears are small and their eyesight and hearing are not as good as their sense of smell. Like all bears, the black bear is timid, clumsy, and rarely dangerous, but if attacked, most can climb trees and cover ground at great speeds. When angry or frightened, it is a formidable enemy. Black bears feed on leaves, herbs. Fruit, berries, insects, fish, and even larger animals. One of the most interesting characteristics of bears, including the black bear, is their winter sleep. Unlike squirrels, woodchucks, and many other woodland animals, bears do not actually hibernate. Although the bear does not during the winter moth, sustaining itself from body fat, its temperature remains almost normal, and it breathes regularly four or five times per minute. Most black bears live alone, except during mating season. They prefer to live in caves, hollow logs, or dense thickets. A litter of one to four cubs is born in January or February after a gestation period of six to nine months, and they remain with their mother until they are fully grown or about

one and a half years old. Black bears can live as long as thirty years in the wild , and even longer in game preserves set aside for them.

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