

September-October 2014

THE AMERICAN BLACK BEAR

by Lanny and Marilyn Johnson

NOTE: This article was inspired by a bear that visited our home in late July of 2014. These pictures were taken with my cell phone, with my 3 year old granddaughter standing next to me ... an experience she will remember for a long time.

The Jones family had just come into their house after picking the last of the ripe apricots from a tree near a small pond in their back yard. They sat down in an enclosed porch at the back of the house to snack on the apricots.

"Mom and Dad!" squealed Billy. "There's a huge dog by the pond!"

When Mr. Jones looked to the pond he was



amazed. "That is not a dog, Billy. That is a bear, an American Black Bear!"

"A bear!" cried out Mary. "Yipes! We were just where it is walking just a few minutes ago! It could have attacked us!"

"Probably not, Mary," her father explained. "Black bears will rarely attack people.

If it feels it is in danger, the bear might stand on its back feet, bare its teeth, and growl to scare you away, but it probably would not attack you unless it felt cornered or felt its cubs were in danger."

"If that ol' bear came after me, I would run real fast to get away," boasted Billy.

"You are a fast runner, Billy, but not fast enough. The fastest man on earth has run 23.7 miles per hour (38.1 km/h), but a black bear can run 25 to 30 miles per hour (40-50 km/h)," warned Mr. Jones.

"Well then, I would just jump in the pond and swim away, or climb a tree to get away from it!"

"That wouldn't work either, Billy. Black bears are excellent swimmers and good tree climbers. If you see a black bear, the best thing is not to run, but make noise by talking and without looking directly into its eyes back away slowly," explained Mr. Jones.

"We live in town, so why do you think a bear, that lives in the woods, is in our yard?" asked Mrs. Jones.

"American Black Bears are omnivores, which mean they eat plants and animals. Most of their diet comes from plants – grasses, roots, buds, shoots, herbs, nuts, fruit, berries and seeds. They will also eat honey, insects, fish,



small mammals, insects, dead animals, garbage and human food. It has been a very dry summer, and there's not much fruit, berries or seeds in the woods this year, so I am guessing that our bear is just hungry and is looking for something to eat. Thankfully our garbage cans are locked in the garage," explained Mr. Jones.

"Why is it called a black bear, Dad?" Mary asked. "Our bear is kind of reddish-brown."

"Black bears are usually black but it can also be dark brown, cinnamon (like our bear), yellow-brown, grayish blue, or (very rarely) white.

"I was just reading the other day about some very special designs that black bears have. Black bears go into a long sleep in the winter, curled up in dens, but unlike true hibernating animals, black bears can awaken and leave their dens to feed, if they need to, throughout the winter. Researchers have discovered that when black bears hibernate, their body temperature only drops a little.¹ However; their other body functions slow down to about 25% of normal rates. This explains how the bears can spend five to seven month in their dens without eating, drinking, urinating or defecating ... and before you ask, Billy, that means they don't potty or 'poo'," chuckled Mr. Jones. "During that time, they lose weight but they don't lose muscle or bone mass."

"Another interesting design God gave female black bears is called 'delayed implantation'.² This means that even though the mother bear mates in the middle of summer, the fertilized eggs do not begin to develop until the fall. This ensures that bear cubs are not born until the

winter months of January or February, safe and warm in the protection of the den while their mother hibernates. The mother bear may have 1 to 5 cubs. The cubs will stay with their mother for 2 to 3 years as she teaches them to hunt and survive," concluded Mr. Jones.

"Oh look kids ... our bear is leaving. Bears, like many other animals we have learned about, have many wonderful designs that point to a Creator. I am sure there are even more interesting things about bears that your father didn't cover, so I would like both of you, Billy and Mary, to spend some time in our library and find some more information on the American Black Bear," instructed Mrs. Jones.

¹ <http://creation.com/focus-341>

² <https://answersingenesis.org/kids/mammals/bears/black-bear/>

INTERESTING THINGS THE JONES CHILDREN FOUND ABOUT AMERICAN BLACK BEARS (ABBs)

- ABBs are found in North America (Canada, USA and Mexico).
- ABBs are the smallest of the three bear species found in North America.
- There are about 396,000 to 476,000 ABBs in North America.
- ABBs live in a variety of forested areas with thick ground cover and an abundance of fruits, nuts and vegetation.
- ABBs are not social creatures. They live alone except for mothers with cubs, during the breeding season or when they come together at feeding sites.
- ABBs are very territorial animals. They mark trees with their claws and bodies to warn other bears to keep out of their area.
- ABBs have longer and less furry ears, smaller shoulder humps, and a rounder profile than a brown bear.
- ABBs are very strong ... even bear cubs can toss aside 310 - 325 pound (140 -147 kg) rocks.
- ABBs are about 2 to 3 feet high (.6 - 1.0 m) from

the ground to their shoulders.

• ABB females (called sows) weigh from 85 - 520 pounds (39 - 236 kg) and are 4 - 5.3 feet long (1.2 - 1.6 m).

• ABB males (called boars) weigh from 100 - 900 pounds (47 - 409 kg) and are 4 - 6.5 feet long (1.4 - 2 m). The largest ABB ever recorded weighed around 1,100 pounds (500 kg), and was 7.9 feet long (2.4 m)!

• ABB cubs at birth are born blind (they will begin to see in 28 - 40 days), weigh only 10 - 16 ounces (.28 - .45 kg), and are only 8 inches long (20.3 cm). They become mature at 3 years and are adults at 5 years old.

FIND THE HIDDEN OBJECTS IN THE PICTURE BELOW:

BEARS - 5 HIDDEN AND 1 NOT HIDDEN

BEAR PAW PRINTS - 10

CAT

CALF

COW

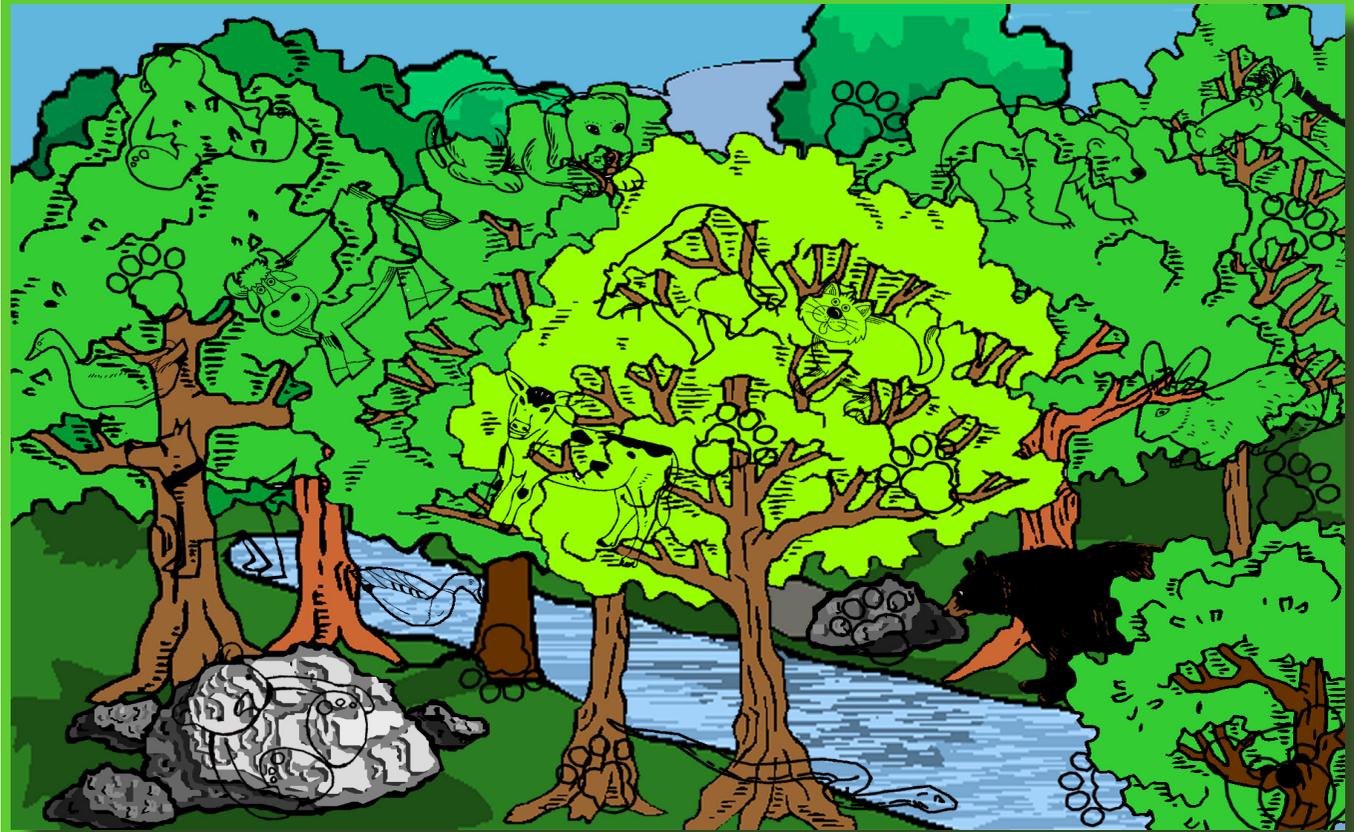
DOG - 2

DUCK - 2

HORSE HEAD

RABBIT

SNAKE



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