

# Bear Food

(Supplement to “How Many Bears Can Live in This Forest”)



Illustration of Grizzly Bear from “Mountain Wildlife” by Marj Dunmire  
Published by Pegasus Graphics, 1352 Marys Lake Road, Moraine Rt., Estes Park, CO 80517  
ISBN: 0-942559-03-7

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*If you are a brown bear living on Admiralty island in Southeast Alaska, you would:*

weigh 600 pounds  
have a 50 square-mile home range  
eat 20 pounds of food a day

food breakdown:

- 50% salmon
- 25% sedges
- 12% berries
  - 3% salmonberries
  - 2% currant
  - 2% blueberry
  - 5% devil’s club berries
- 3% skunk cabbage
- 2% horsetail reeds
- 2% deer
- 2% mice
- 2% miscellaneous carrion
- 2% miscellaneous

*If you are a grizzly bear living on the North Slope of the Alaskan Range you would:*

weigh 350 pounds  
have a 300-400 square-mile home range  
eat 14 pounds of food a day

food breakdown:

- 25% horsetail reeds
- 25% grass
- 25% bear cabbage
  - 6% caribou
  - 5% flowers
  - 5% ground squirrels
  - 3% mice
  - 2% berries
  - 4% roots, bees, eggs

*If you are an adult male black bear living on the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge in Alaska, you would:*

weigh 170 pounds  
have a 165 square-mile home range  
eat 6 pounds of food a day

food breakdown:

- 36% fruits and berries
  - 17.6% lowbush cranberry
  - 7.2% devil’s club
  - 4.2% twisted-stock
  - 7.0% miscellaneous berries
- 34% animal matter
  - 13.7% insects
  - 10.7% moose
  - 3.5% hare
  - 2.6% birds
  - 2.0% insect larvae
  - 1.6% fish, small animals
- 28% green vegetation
  - 13.6% horsetail reeds
  - 5.6% grass, sedge
  - 4.4% clover
  - 3.9% leaves, moss
- 2% flowers

# Idaho Bear Food

(Supplement to “How Many Bears Can Live in This Forest”)

Another extension for the food portion of the “How Many Bears” activity has been provided by John Beecham, the Idaho Assistant Chief of Wildlife.

Since bears don't have nuts available to eat, they eat other foods, and much more of them. The average Idaho bear will eat 20-25 pounds of food a day – that's 250 pounds in a 10-day period – and much more than the 80 pounds consumed by the Arizona bears in the activity guide.

The breakdown for food for an Idaho bear is as follows:

Berries	90 lbs.	36%
Grass	75 lbs.	30%
Forbs (brush)	35 lbs.	14%
Insects	30 lbs.	12%
Meat	5 lbs.	2%
Miscellaneous	15 lbs.	6%

(One point to keep in mind with all these figures – bears generally eat nothing but grasses in spring and summer, berries in the fall, and the other food items become interspersed in the diet throughout the year.)

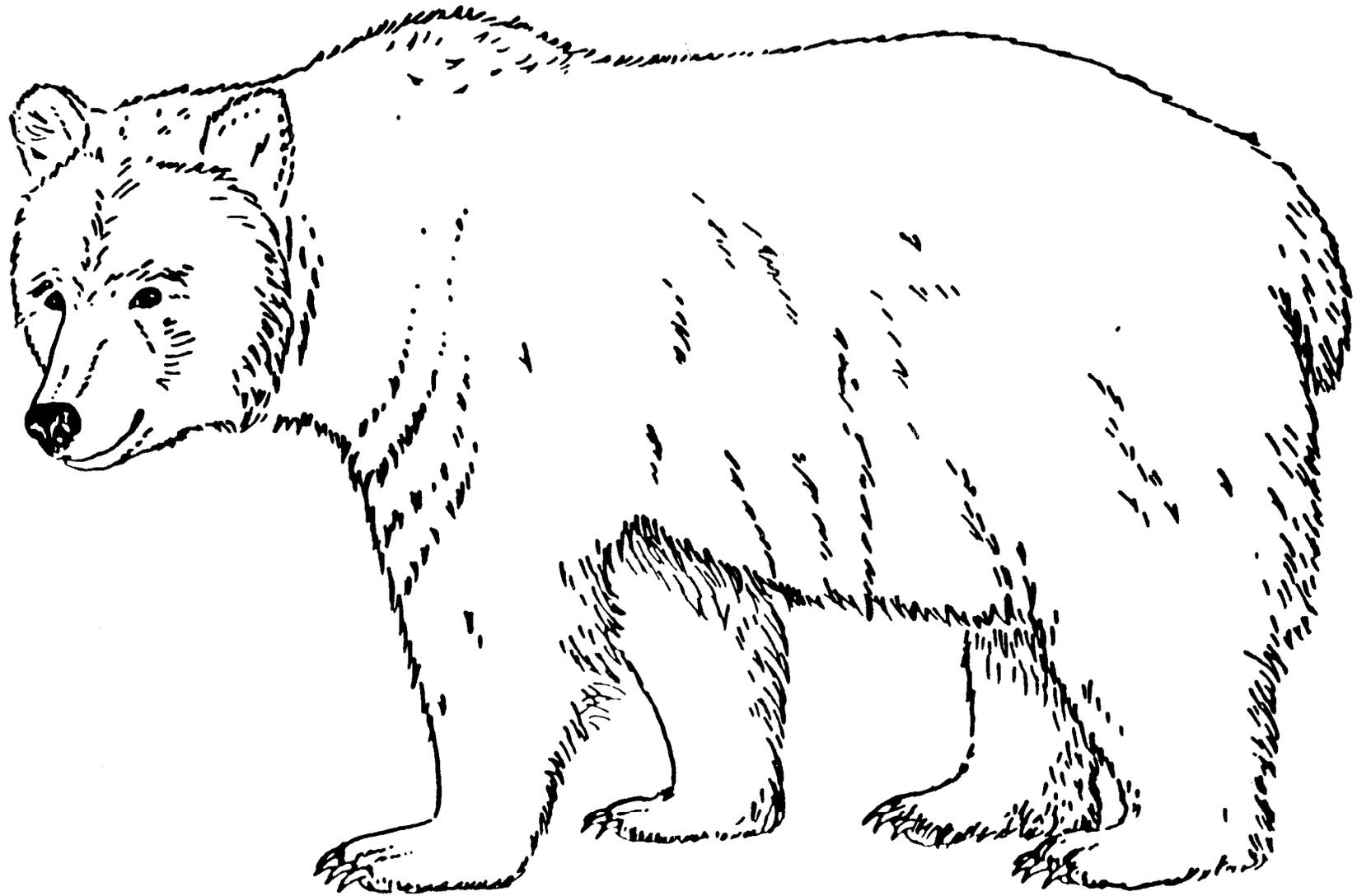
To parallel the Idaho food requirements with the activity cards, the following cards and values should be used. Since some are expressed in fractions, the activity can be used when teaching fractions, or the number can be rounded off if you do not want to work with fractions.

Food Type	Color	Values
Berries	Blue	5 at 90 and 25 at 45
Grass	Green	5 at 75 and 25 at 37.5
Forbs	Brown	5 at 35 and 25 at 17.5
Insects	Yellow	5 at 30 and 25 at 15
Meat	Red	5 at 5 and 25 at 2.5
Miscellaneous	White	5 at 15 and 25 at 7.5

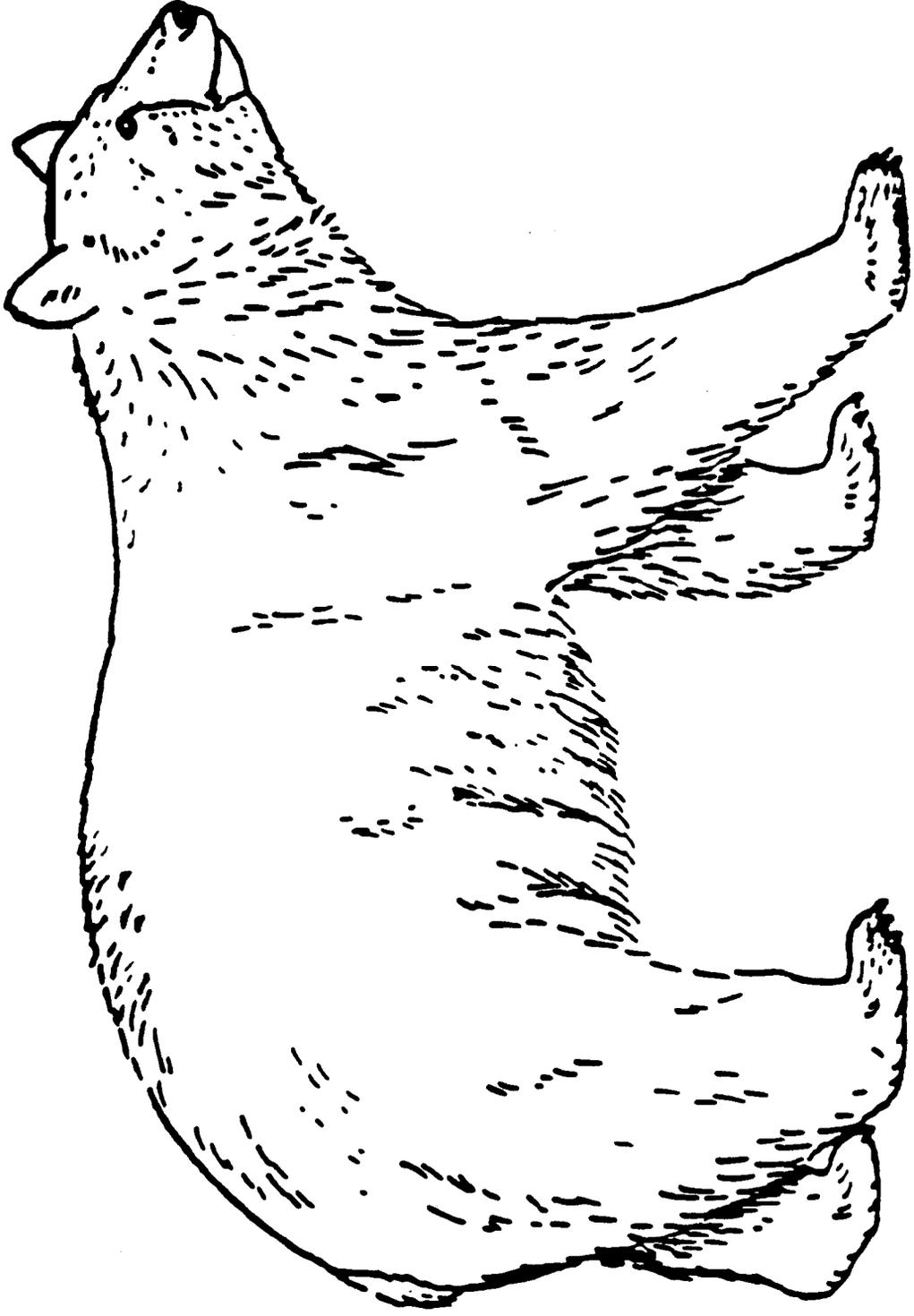
Secondary teachers may find this extension helpful to stimulate a discussion as to how animals adapt to different food types in different environments. Why do Arizona bears require only 80 pounds of food in 10 days and Idaho bears require 250 pounds in the same period? How would the requirements differ in Alaska?

One reason is that nuts provide excellent nutrition – so much that 80 pounds of food with nuts would be equivalent to 250 pounds of food without nuts. This even causes cubs to grow more rapidly. For example, in Pennsylvania a one-year-old cub may go into a den weighing 100 pounds. In Idaho, a 100-pound cub is three years old.

# BROWN BEAR



# BLACK BEAR



# POLAR BEAR

