

NATUREWILD

Magazine for the **NATUREKIDS** of British Columbia | Spring 2017

- Bears around the world...
- Rainforest & bears
- Water bears



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a look
INSIDE!

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QUESTIONS?
COMMENTS?



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Celebrating Long Term Nature Club Leaders!

NatureKIDS BC would like to honour some long term Club Leaders who have given so much to our members over many years.

NatureKIDS (then known as the Young Naturalists' Club) launched in 2000. That same year Alison Bakker started the first club on Vancouver Island, the Nanaimo Club. When she moved to Qualicum she took over the Oceanside Club; for a while she ran both clubs! We celebrate 16 years of her leadership!

Five leaders have given 10 years or more to NatureKIDS: Gail Ross (Prince George), Anthea Farr and Lynn Pollard (Nicomekl), Tricia Edgar (North Vancouver), and Sue Hemphill (Williams Lake).

A huge **THANK YOU!** to these long serving Club Leaders and to all Leaders – NatureKids could not succeed without your dedication to sharing your love of nature with families throughout BC.

Valery Ross, President, NatureKIDS BC



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/NATUREKIDSBBC



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NatureKIDS BC is THE club for children and families who love to be outdoors. Members discover nature on Explorer Days organized by volunteer leaders and guided by experts, participate in stewardship projects, earn Action Awards and receive **NATUREWILD** magazine 4 times a year.

Come join us! Family membership: \$25 per year. Schools membership: \$45 per year. Or subscribe to **NATUREWILD** magazine: \$20 for 4 issues per year. For more information and to sign up online go to: naturekidsbc.ca

Thank you to our sponsors and supporters who share our vision that all children be connected with nature.



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Front Cover photo: Cedar tree Vancouver Island: TJ Watt Ancient Tree Alliance, B.C. inset Images: Koala: frhoads84, CC Spirit Bear: Dave Holliss, B.C. • Grizzly and 2 cubs: Dave Holliss, B.C. • page 2: Explorer Day: Daphne Solecki, B.C.



Bear Aware!

I'll bet that many of you plan to go hiking this summer. Where you hike may be where bears plan to spend their summer. You don't want problems with the bears. What can you do to make sure you and the bears both have a good time? De-code this message and find out.

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♥	♥	👑	👑	👣	👣	👣	🐟	✕✕✕	🌀	🌀	🌙	🌙
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Now look at the pictures on this page.

Put a check mark against a picture that shows the right thing to do.

Put a big X over the picture showing the wrong thing to do.



Bear Aware Information:

www.bearsmart.com (Get Bear Smart Society)

www.wildsafebc.com (British Columbia Conservation Society Program)

www.northshorebears.com (North Shore Black Bear Society)



Bears around the world

from largest to smallest

1. Polar Bear Lives in the most northern part of the world, the Arctic. Most polar bears live in Canada – the rest are in Alaska, Russia, Norway, Denmark and Greenland.

The polar bear is the largest bear and the largest carnivore (meat-eating animal) that lives on land. The polar bear's paws are **huge**, about 30 cm across, probably bigger than your face! Fur on the paws protects the bear from slipping, and the powerful claws grip the ice.



2. Brown Bear (Grizzly) Lives all across the world - Canada, the U.S., Europe and Asia.

We call brown bears 'grizzly bears' because the dark hair on their backs and shoulders has white tips and give the bears a "grizzled" look, like a man's grey beard. Grizzlies have a big hump on their shoulders made by their super strong muscles. Grizzlies can dig up roots, tear apart logs, move rocks and dig through rocky ground using their long sharp claws.



3. Black Bear Lives only in the Americas, from the far north of Canada and Alaska to Mexico and Central America.

Black bears come in several colours - black, brown, gray, silvery-blue. The Kermode bear (the Spirit Bear) is actually a black bear with white fur.

The black bear is the one you are most likely to see. They don't normally attack humans but they might if the human comes between a mother bear and her cubs.



4. Giant Panda Lives only in China.

Giant pandas look completely different from other bears. Scientists used to think they were related to raccoons, but DNA testing now shows that pandas ARE bears which have adapted to an all-vegetable diet. They sometimes eat other plants, small animals or fish, but 99% of their diet is bamboo. They spend 12 hours a day eating because bamboo is not very nutritious.

There are about 1,000 pandas left in the world, and they are now a protected species.



5. Asiatic or 'Moon' Bear

Lives in the Himalayas and Tibet.

The yellowish marking on its chest looks like a new moon.

Asiatic bears are fiercer than other bears and will attack humans. This is not surprising because humans are their main enemy – humans are quickly turning bear habitat into farmland, then kill bears that come onto the farms. These bears stay out of the way of humans by spending a lot of time in trees.



6. Sloth Bear

Lives in India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Burma and Nepal.

Termites are a sloth bear's main food, and the sloth bear has a special way of eating them. It has hairless, flexible lips with gaps in its teeth, a long tongue and nostrils that can close. The bear claws a hole in the hard termite mound, sticks its snout into the hole, closes its nostrils and with a powerful suck, 'vacuums' the termites into its mouth. Its long tongue licks up the termites that get away.



7. Spectacled Bear

Lives in the Andes Mountains in South America.

The picture shows how the bear got its name - the face markings make it look as though it is wearing spectacles. These bears are excellent climbers with short, strong legs. They build nests high in trees where they sleep and eat.

Have you read the stories about **Paddington Bear** - did you know that Paddington is a **spectacled bear** who came from Peru, South America?



8. Sun Bear

Lives in Malaysia and other South Asian countries

Sun bears are named for the golden patch of fur on their chests. They are only about the size of a large dog. They have loose skin so when a tiger bites them they can twist and bite back, then their strong legs help them escape by climbing trees. Sun bears love honey. When the bear finds a beehive in a tree, it rips it open with its strong claws then rolls out a long, long tongue (nearly 25 cm long!) to slurp up the honey - and a lot of bees along with it. Stings don't bother them!



photo credits:

Asiatic Bear: Drew Avery, CC
Sloth Bear: Stacy Spensley, CC
Spectacled Bear: Steve Wilson, CC
Sun Bear: Henry Doorly Zoo, CC

Just for fun

bears which are not bears!



Red Bear-cat (or Red Panda) This beautiful little animal lives in the mountains of Nepal, in Myanmar and in China. It is a little bigger than a house-cat and mostly lives in trees. It waddles when it walks because its front legs are shorter than its back legs. The red bear-cat lives in trees and like other small mammals (such as raccoons and skunks) it sleeps most of the day; it uses its ringed tail as a wraparound blanket in the chilly mountain heights. Then at night the red bear-cat comes out to eat. It eats bamboo, but also eats eggs, birds and insects.

Koala Bear The koalas found in Australia are not bears. They are pouched mammals (marsupials) like kangaroos. Koala babies grow up in their mother's pouch until they are old enough to look after themselves.

Koalas are plant eaters and live in trees, usually eucalyptus trees. They live very comfortably in trees because they have two long digits (fingers) like our thumb and fore-finger. These help the koala to grip tight to branches and to pick eucalyptus leaves, their favourite food. They have strong legs, tough skin on the soles of their feet, long sharp claws for climbing, and extra thick fur on their bottoms so they can be comfortable sitting on branches and not moving for hours and hours.



(Almost all marsupials are found in Australia – there are no native marsupials in New Zealand; the only marsupial found in the Americas is the Virginia opossum.)

The Woolly-Bear caterpillar Well, anyone can see that the woolly-bear caterpillar is not a bear! It is the caterpillar of the Isabella Tiger Moth (*Pyrrharctia isabella*). People say you can tell how cold the winter is going to be from looking at the colours of the caterpillar. If there is more reddish brown the winter will be mild. If the dark bands are bigger, then the winter will be cold.



The story-book bear who was a real bear!

Did you know that Winnie the Pooh was once a real, live, Canadian bear?



Just over 100 years ago, when Britain was at war with Germany in World War 1, Canadian soldiers went to Europe to help Britain.

One of those soldiers was Lieutenant Harry Colebourn from Winnipeg. Harry had always loved animals and he became a veterinarian. Horses were still used in war in those days, so Harry joined the Fort Garry Horse cavalry regiment as a veterinary officer.

He was travelling on the train on his way to sail to England, when the train stopped at a little town called White River, in Ontario. Harry got off the train to stretch his legs, and there he saw a man with a black bear cub, no more than seven months old, for sale.

Harry fell in love with the cub and bought her for \$20. He called the cub 'Winnipeg' after his home town, but soon shortened it to 'Winnie'.

Harry spent many weeks training with other soldiers and Winnie proved a trusty companion. Harry trained Winnie with rewards of apples and a mixture of condensed milk and corn syrup. The cub slept under his cot and followed him around like a puppy. When not climbing tent poles or playing with her owner, the gentle bear posed for photographs with soldiers and became the regiment's mascot.

When Harry sailed for England, Winnie went too; however, after a few weeks Harry had to go over to France to join the fighting. He could not take Winnie into battle, so he took her to a new home at the London Zoo.

The war went on for a long time, but whenever Harry had leave, he visited Winnie in her new home. Although she had grown from cub into bear, Winnie remained as gentle as ever. The zookeeper said that Winnie was "quite the gentlest bear we have ever had at the zoo." People would knock on her door and she would open it and come out. Children were allowed to enter the bear pit to ride on Winnie's back, feed her out of their hands and even have birthday parties with her!

After the war was over, Harry felt he should leave Winnie in her new home because the children loved her so much. One of those children was a boy called Christopher Robin. He visited Winnie as often as his father could take him; Winnie would hug him and he fed her with spoonfuls of condensed milk. He even changed the name of his own teddy bear, Edward, to Winnie.

Later, Christopher Robin's father A.A. Milne, who was an author, started to write stories about Winnie for his son; all Christopher Robin's other toys became Pooh's friends living in the Hundred Acre Wood.

So that's the true story of Winnie-the-Pooh!

photo credits: Winnie with Harry - public domain
Winnie, Christopher Robin's own teddy bear: aprilskiver, CC



The Rainforest and

The rainforests in British Columbia are magical places. In the forests the air is damp and the light is dim because branches of the huge cedar trees block out most of the light. It is very quiet, often with just the sound of water dripping or rushing along in the streams. It is cool but not cold. The trees are draped in strands of lichen and moss grows over everything. The ground is covered with a tangle of ferns, small trees and fallen branches that animals can easily get over, under and through although travel for humans is difficult.

Many different animals – fish, insects, frogs, birds and mammals - live in and around the rainforest. The largest fish is the salmon while the Bald Eagle rules the sky but the bears are king on the ground.

The biggest rainforest area is on the mainland of BC - the Great Bear Rainforest - but there are rainforests on Vancouver Island and on Haida Gwaii. Black bears are found in all the rainforest areas. The bears on Haida Gwaii are much larger than other black bears, with huge heads and enormous teeth.

Grizzly bears too can be found in the Great Bear Rainforest, which is also the only place where the very special white Spirit Bears live.

The rainforest gives bears a home, and in return, the bears look after the forest. How?

It happens in the fall when the salmon come swimming up the rivers and streams to spawn. Generally bears like to live by themselves but when the salmon come they all go down to the river to fish. Bears love salmon. The bigger bears may push the smaller bears and cubs away from the best fishing spots, but usually there is plenty for everyone.

The bears drag the salmon away from the water to eat them. What they leave on the ground feeds insects and other small creatures and eventually decomposes into fish fertilizer for the trees. This is how the bears take care of the forest.



and Bears



Legend of the White Spirit Bear

Raven and Spirit Bear

A legend of the Gitga'at and Kitasoo Native Peoples tells about the White Spirit Bear.

The legend tells of a time in the beginning when Mother Earth was white with ice and snow.

Then Raven, the creator, made everything green. He decided that one in ten black bears would have white fur.

The white bears would remind people of the time of the glaciers. Raven said these bears would live in a special place.

They would live in the Great Bear Rainforest and Raven promised to keep the Spirit Bears living in peace.

Rainforest Conservation – the Power of One

On a family camping trip when he was 7 years old, Simon Jackson saw a grizzly bear. When he learned that grizzlies could be hunted, he was determined to try and save them. That year he set up a lemonade stand and raised \$60 to protect grizzly bears. In 1995, when he was 13, he saw the endangered white Kermode bear, also called the Spirit Bear or Ghost Bear. When he learned there was no protection for Spirit Bears and that the rainforest they lived in could be logged, he was determined to change that. "The Spirit Bear is as special to Canada as the Panda bear in China. It lives only in my home province, British Columbia," he said.

Simon started the Spirit Bear Youth Coalition (SBYC) and got 700 kids to write letters asking the government to keep logging companies out of the bear's habitat. With the help of 6 million SBCY'ers including heads of state, rock stars and environmentalists like Jane Goodall and David Suzuki, in 2016 - after 20 years of campaigning - most of the Great Bear Rainforest was protected from logging.



Rainforest Neighbours

Along with bears, eagles and salmon there are many other animals, large and small, sharing the rich habitat of the rainforest. If you were able to wander through the forest here are some creatures you might see.

1. River Otters, fun-loving predators which mostly eat fish, sometimes turtles and crayfish. They hunt in estuaries, swamps and lakes but do spend a lot of time on land. River otters love to play, sliding down muddy hills and splashing down into the water.

2. American Dipper, which got its name from its habit of dipping or bobbing up and down. The Dipper is a truly water-loving songbird - it jumps right into swiftly flowing streams and catches its food underwater. It is quite an amazing sight when it sits on a rock and seems to wink at you! Dippers love salmon eggs but mostly eat insects.

3. Harlequin Duck (male) is the most colourful native BC bird - the female is duller, so that she doesn't show up while sitting on the nest. Harlequins live on rocky shores in rough water. Their feathers trap a lot of air which helps them keep warm. It also helps them bounce up like corks after a dive.

4. Raven calls harshly from the tree tops or makes clicking noises. The Raven is an amazing flier, doing barrel rolls, flying upside down, and other acrobatic tricks.

5. Grey Wolf, largest member of the dog family, comes sneaking down to the river in spawning season. Grey wolves normally feed on deer, but in fall come down to eat the rich fatty meat of salmon which helps them get through the winter.

6. Black-tailed Deer eat many different plants - Douglas-fir, red cedar, deer fern, lichens growing on trees, berries, apples, fireweed and maple as well as the tender ends of shrubs. If the wildflowers look like they have been picked the deer have been by. Bucks drop their antlers in winter and grow new ones in spring. Antlers are not wasted on the forest floor; they provide calcium and many nutrients to other forest inhabitants.

7. Pacific Giant Salamander likes to live near cool, clear, streams hiding under leaf litter and fallen tree branches. This large amphibian is feasting on another rainforest creature, the **Banana Slug**.



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'Water Bears' by Brian Herrin

Tiny but indestructible ...

Scientists have discovered over 1000 species of tardigrades and even publish a Tardigrade Newsletter.

However, as far as we know, tardigrades can't read what's written about them!



and really cute!



"Boil them, deep freeze them, dry them out or blast them into space, they will survive all of that and still come back for more." So says Sir David Attenborough, the famous British naturalist. What amazing animal is he talking about?

Water Bears! Also known as moss piglets, their real name is *tardigrades*.

Tardigrade means 'slow stepper' - they are not quick movers at all. Tardigrades are very tiny animals that live in water. The largest examples are just under a millimetre long when fully grown. However, most are about the size of the period at the end of this sentence.

They have barrel shaped bodies with eight legs, each with claws, with the last pair right at the back end. These two hind legs are used for grabbing hold of wherever they are so they can stay in one place. The other three pairs are used for moving around.

Tardigrades were first discovered in 1773 and so far they have been found in almost every habitat from snow covered mountaintops to deep in the ocean and from the Equator to the North and South Poles. Small as they are, for every human being there are about a billion tardigrades!

Over 1000 species of 'water bears' have been described and most live by sucking juices from mosses, algae and lichens. Some females lay eggs in their moulted body cases and these are fertilized by a passing male. The eggs develop quickly and hatch after about 14 days. Amazingly, the young have all the cells they will ever have - to get to adult size the individual cells just get bigger!

So how **do** these tiny neighbours of ours survive very extreme environments? They moult their skin, reabsorb their legs and shut down their metabolism (all the chemical reactions in their body) to become a little wrinkled tube that is called a **tun** because it looks like a (very small!) beer barrel.

This process takes about an hour, but after it's done, tuns can survive amazingly hostile conditions. Some tuns have survived temperatures well above 60°C (which would certainly kill a human) and some have even survived in boiling water. Tuns found in a moss sample were able to produce eggs, even though the sample had been frozen for 30 years at -20°C. Tuns have survived extreme radiation, pressures greater than those in the deepest ocean trenches or as low as outer space, and they can easily survive with no food or water for **30** years or more. When they are rehydrated they move around to eat and in two weeks or so they can reproduce!

Yes, you can kill them by changing the surrounding conditions too quickly, but in their usual environments they are virtually indestructible. Tardigrades are truly a candidate for **"The animal most likely to survive - ANYTHING!"**

(On page 14 Dr. Doowitt will tell you how you can find tardigrades and study them)

Two great websites for Tardigrades are:

1. <http://www.vox.com/science-and-health/2016/1/12/10755204/tardigrades-waterbears-explained>
2. <http://serc.carleton.edu/microbelife/topics/tardigrade/resources.html>

Tardigrades can survive almost anything!

boiling

extreme cold

deepest ocean

outer space

extreme dryness

Tardigrade
eggs laid
inside a
moulted
skin.

Have a Nature Question?

ASK AL

Al Grass has worked as a career park naturalist and ranger throughout BC. Now he is a well-known nature tour leader and photographer. Al especially likes birds, insects and spiders.



We asked Al to tell us a story about being a park naturalist and here it is:

SOMETHING THAT WENT 'CRUNCH' IN THE NIGHT!



It was getting dark and campers had gathered at the park's outdoor theatre for my evening program. Soon after I started my talk, there came a 'c-r-u-n-c-h-i-n-g' sound from bushes nearby. "It's a BEAR!" someone shouted. "No" I said, "It's a toad" Again came the 'crunch' and again came the shout, "It's a BEAR!"

Well, there was no going on with the program with all that shouting. I went over to the leaves lying on the ground by the bushes where the crunchy sounds were coming from and - sure enough - I found a beautiful **Western toad!** So I gave a little talk about the toad and put it back where I found it. No bears that night! **Al Grass**

Water Bear Hunting no license required

by **Dr. Eucan Doowitt**

Water Bears and their tuns are found in both wet and dry moss and lichen clumps, so the first job is to collect some. You can scrape moss and lichen off fences, soil and tree bark with a table knife. To rehydrate the tuns, place the scrapings in a small bowl of rainwater for a few hours.

After washing and rinsing your hands well, take a small clump of the mixture, lift it to drain, and squeeze it over a clear plastic container or Petri dish.

With a dissecting microscope or a compound microscope on low power (40X) scan the dish for any movement of the particles from the squeezed sample. I used bottom illumination with a microscope but the dish could be placed on white paper. If you do see some movement, then have a good look at what is creating it. Search carefully for four pairs of short stumpy legs with curved claws. Three pair will be on the sides and the last pair will be right at the back, similar to the photo above.

When you have finished looking at Water Bears and whatever else you find, return them to the moss/lichen mix and put them back where they came from. These animals may be very small but each one is important!

Happy Hunting!



NATUREWILD • NEWS



Passports to Nature

It seems that most **NatureKIDS** went into hibernation this past season as we have received only four completed passports! **Heather** (Nicomekl) completed passport #5 and earned a guide to Surrey Parks. **Theron** (TriCities) and **Rita** (Victoria) each completed their passport #4 and earned their 'Rite in the Rain' notebooks! **Iris** (North Vancouver) completed passport #2 and earned her NKBC cap. Well done, all of you!

Welcome to our newest club - NatureKIDS Merritt Club! Volunteer Co-leaders: Crystal and Roxanne. Club email: Merritt@naturekidsbc.ca If you know anyone who lives in Merritt please let them know about the new club.

NatureKIDS South Okanagan: South Okanagan member Felix turned 6 years old on November 30th. Felix loves exploring nature with his friends and learning about wild animals. For his birthday he chose to make a \$35 donation towards the **NatureKIDS** program. When asked why he wanted to make this donation he said "because I like to keep nature clean". His donation will go towards stewardship projects that ensure clean air and water for all living creatures!



NatureKIDS Oceanside: In December members had a great time making table decorations and bird feeders out of cones. They thought you might like to see their creations.

Memberships donated to Syrian Immigrant Families:

From: Dr. Dan Robinson, Coquitlam. He tells us: "The donation was made in my name by my mom. At Christmas, we decided as a family that we already have more than we need. Rather than give stuff, we each chose an organization to donate to that would have some meaning for the person receiving the gift."

"I have always loved nature and the outdoors so I gave **NatureKIDS** memberships to a few Syrian immigrant families in the Tri-cities area. I hope this will help them connect with nature and make friends in their new home. Please welcome them."



Offer Club: Home Learners (Lower Mainland) enjoy working on wetland restoration!



Ridge Meadows NatureKids

completed in a tree decorating contest at the Pitt Meadows Family Recreation Centre and

WON! They made bird nests out of twigs, moss and feathers, painted rocks for eggs and made birdseed, pinecone, twig, beehive and mason bee ornaments among others out of tree bark.



If You Go Out in the Woods

By Tricia Edgar: What do Black Bears like to eat? Bears like many different foods. Here are some of the foods that are on a Black Bear's menu. Can you guess what they are? The answers are at the bottom of the page.



A bear's body slows down during the winter months. In the spring, bears eat the buds and leaves of this plant to unplug their digestive system.
photo: Rosemary Taylor, B.C.



In the spring, the bears are really hungry. They'll eat these small animals if they can find them, and they'll even eat animal carcasses.
photo: D. Shackleton, B.C.



While black bears can eat other animals, they mostly eat plants. Don't be surprised if you see a bear eating this plant by the side of the road in the spring or early summer.
photo: D. Shackleton, B.C.



Black bears find that these insects are delicious. Black bears eat a variety of insects to get protein and fat during the summer months.
photo: janerc, CC



These berries are tiny, but there are many of them in the forest. Summertime means berry-picking time for bears and they gather them one by one using their flexible lips.
photo: Rosemary Taylor, B.C.



A bear that finds this food is one lucky bear but the humans who raise this food may not feel so lucky! Bears eat the larvae inside and get a sweet treat as well.
photo: Ruth & Dave, CC



Bears love to eat fruit. It contains lots of sugar that bears turn into energy. People who live in bear country need to harvest this fruit early or it will attract bears to the garden.
photo: Domiriel, CC



Any bears who live near creeks or near the ocean will hunt for these animals in the fall. Eating them helps the bears gain weight before winter begins.
photo: Rob Alexander, B.C.



Answers: 1) skunk cabbage • 2) rodent
3) grass • 4) ant pupae • 5) huckleberry
6) honeycomb • 7) apple • 8) salmon



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