



Picture Books

Discovering Black Bears

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Like counting rings on a tree stump, looking at a cross section of a black bear's tooth will reveal its age. A 200-pound black bear begins life at a mere of a pound, and can be brown, cinnamon, blue-gray, or even white. Children discover these remarkable facts about the North American mammal through short, descriptive passages and twenty accompanying activities, from codes and games to stickers and crossword puzzles.

Topics comprise anatomy, hibernation, cub care, communication, habitats, food, and differences among other bears, as well as bears in constellations, their importance in Native American history, trivia, and even a ghost story. The book profiles several wildlife biologists, such as Lynn Rogers from the Wildlife Research Institute and scat detective Sue Mansfield. Scientific equipment is explained, the different methods of tracking bears, and field research techniques. The book also emphasizes human's impact on black bears, and how to practice good conservation, especially when "visiting bear country."

The authors of this Discovering Nature Library title have written other books in the series, including *Ancient Forests*, a Parents' Choice award winner, and *Leapfrogging Through Wetlands*, winner of Parents' Choice and Parents' Media awards and a Ben Franklin award in the category of science/environment. The illustrator, who has also contributed to several titles in the series, uses earth-toned paintings to show black bears in their natural environment. They not only depict black bears among the changing seasons, but in such various habitats as the northern woods and a southern swamp. Black-and-white sketches for children to color or for educators to reproduce are included.

Discovering Black Bears can be used independently by upper elementary- and middle

school-aged children or as a shared family, classroom, or group activity. No matter how it is enjoyed, children will lose their misconceptions of black bears as large teddy bears or ferocious creatures on the prowl, and see them as important members in an ecosystem that need protection.

Angela Leeper