

Black Pine Animal Sanctuary

Animal Facts

Breed: AMERICAN BLACK BEAR

Names / Sex / Age:

Betsy	Female	Unknown, estimated 11-18 years
Ben	Male	12 years
Trouble	Male	19 years
Taz	Male	11 years
Tasha	Female	11 years

Previous Home: Betsy was first kept as a privately owned “pet” by a man in southern Indiana. She was confiscated by DNR and placed with another private owner in central Indiana. DNR removed her from this second home in June 2009 and placed her permanently at Black Pine. Ben was part of a traveling ‘educational’ show that appeared at state fairs primarily on the east coast. He was surrendered by owners due to legal restrictions on traveling and housing, as well as costs of care and compliance. Trouble was kept by a private owner in Warsaw, IN until illness forced his surrender and transfer to Great Cats of IN in 2000 when Trouble was 8 years old. Taz and Tasha were kept in a garage by a private owner in OH. They were surrendered at six months of age in 2001 and went to Great Cats of IN. The three bears were surrendered by Great Cats of IN to BPAS in 2011 due to health and financial issues.

Native to: All of Canada, many states in the U.S. Much of their range is shared with the Grizzly bear in parts of the northern Rockies, western Canada and Alaska.

Weight: The average black bear weighs 100-300 lbs., with males being much larger than females. Betsy is quite small, and weighs an estimated 200-250 pounds. Ben is a large male, weighing between 400 and 500 pounds. Trouble, Taz, and Tasha are all average sized bears, weighing 350 to 450 pounds each.

Life Expectancy: 25 years in the wild; up to 30 years in captivity. This is unlike the other animals which generally see a doubling in life expectancy in captivity.

Diet: All types of vegetation and plant materials, fish, small mammals, carrion, nuts, roots, leaves, corn, honey, bees. Bears will dig up underground wasps nests to eat honey. At Black Pine - fresh fruits, vegetables, bread, fish. Also, the occasional pies, cookies, marshmallows and pastries as a special treat! Dog food or other commercial diets may be fed seasonally in preparation for winter hibernation.

Status: Partially protected; unregulated hunting, vandalism, or commercial exploitation for folk medicine and the pet trade are threats made by humans. Originally was distributed throughout North America, estimated 2 million in the 1500’s, now less than 200,000 exist.

Facts:

- Generally a solitary animal
- A “woof” sound is made when they are startled

- “Warbling” sounds are made when bears compete, a unique vocalization
- A bear’s mood is indicated by the position of its head; walking with their head below their shoulders is likely to result in aggressive behavior
- Generally timid, they spend most waking hours hunting for food
- Males have a range of up to 200 square miles
- The regular stride is about a foot long, but increases to three feet when running
- Can reach ground speeds of up to 30 mph
- Not a true hibernator, but in winter the bear’s body temperature drops, respiration slows, and the metabolic rate is depressed. Through it all, though, they remain in a semiconscious state.
- Babies are born naked and blind, weighing no more than 12 ounces
- You can tell how old a bear is by cutting a canine tooth and counting the rings.
- Ancient native Americans worshipped the bear because they believed they were immortal. In the winter they would witness them “die” and bury themselves, only to “rise up” again in the spring
- Their gall bladders have recently been thought a magical “cure-all” and are one of the hottest items in Chinese medicine

Personal History:

Betsy (formerly known as “Wrigley”) was the third black bear to be adopted by Black Pine in its history. Isaac and Mr. Bear were retired circus performers who lived 32 and 31 years of age respectively. Both passed away after the park’s relocation in 2006.

Betsy was adopted in June 2009 after an officer with the Indiana Department of Natural Resources called, desperate to find a final, permanent home for the lame bear. For about the first six years of the bear’s life she was kept by a man in southern Indiana who reportedly used her as “bait” to train hunting dogs how to “bay” bear (make them stand up for easier targeting).. The dogs would learn the bear’s scent, behaviors, etc. As a result of fending off this abuse Betsy has many missing and broken teeth, is blind in one eye, and suffered a broken front leg that was not treated and has left her with a permanent limp and lack of mobility.

Betsy was confiscated from the abusive situation in 2007 and DNR again placed her in another private home where she lived with two other bears. In 2009 their primary caregiver was found to have left the country, leaving the bears in the care of friends and family who were ill-equipped and frightened, so the animals were not being properly cared for. The two healthier bears were removed and sent to a sanctuary in Colorado, but with Betsy’s special needs the DNR asked Black Pine to give her refuge.

Ben arrived in April 2010 and was adopted along with “Joey” and “Johnny”, the cougars, from the Great American Frontier Show. This traveling “show” is owned by a descendent of circus performers/trainers. Due to state laws that were making it difficult for the family to build a home-base compound in both New York and South Carolina, the animals had been living on a semi-trailer in portable cages for most of two years. As another traveling season was approaching without a home base, the owners decided it was time to find permanent refuge for the aging animals.

Trouble, Taz and Tasha were all among several large animals facing possible confiscation due to deteriorating cages and lack of resources for proper housing at Great Cats of Indiana, formerly a refuge, that closed to the public in early 2009. The owner's health issues and financial challenges led him to surrendering many animals, as well as having some confiscated by DNR as well, throughout 2009-2011. In addition to these three black bears, BPAS adopted three grey wolves and a male lion in 2011 as well.