

# *Ursus arctos* Linnaeus, 1758

Brown bear

Family: Ursidae

Museo Virtuale  
Museo regionale di Scienze Naturali della Valle d'Aosta

Musée Virtuel  
Musée Régional des Sciences Naturelles de la Vallée d'Aoste



(Photo A. Furingo, archive MRSN)

The brown bear is a **large plantigrade** with a heavy body and thick, pelt that can be of a single tone or vary from light to dark brown, sometimes with grey, beige or black shading.

It is linked to wooded environments that allow it to remain hidden and avoid contact with man, although its search for food often leads it to raid urban areas.

It is **omnivorous**, and its diet includes plants (grass, leaves, buds, flowers and fruit as well as bulbs and fungi), invertebrates such as insect larvae, ants, worms and molluscs, while other animals are eaten only occasionally, mostly in springtime, to recover its energy after hibernation.

The winter is spent in caves among the rocks or dens in the woods, in a semi-lethargic state at a reduced metabolic rate.

The bear is **antisocial and solitary**, and only frequents other members of its kind during mating. The females tend to avoid encounters with adult males, who may attack cubs, including their own.

The brown bear was common in the Alps up until the late 19th century, and subsequently disappeared due to human persecution. Its range is now limited to a sector of the Central and Eastern Alps where we have seen a spontaneous spread of Slovenian bears.

The species became **extinct in the Aosta Valley in 1817** when the last remaining individual drowned. This last individual was later included in the collections of the Museum, and welcomed visitors to the old museum location at Château St-Pierre.

Bio-Montagne - Réseau d'éducation sur la biodiversité dans les zones alpines - Programma di cooperazione transfrontaliera Italia-Svizzera 2007-2013

