

Earth's largest predator is taking control

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Fright sight: Polar bears and Kodiak bears can weigh 1,500 pounds and stand 10 feet tall.

Is an average bear cleverer than most humans? The animals are showing how clever they are as they appear in towns and cities worldwide.

What's happening?

The town of Churchill in Canada is known as "the polar bear capital of the world". Hundreds of polar bears travel through the town every autumn on their way to the sea ice.

Many people come to watch. And the bears are spending more time on land as **climate change** means there is less sea ice.

This has caused a problem. Churchill now has a polar-bear jail for bears that cannot be scared away and are putting humans at **risk**.

Find out more

Last August, bears walked around another Canadian town, Yellowknife, after the people left their homes due to wildfires.

In 2019, more than 50 bears visited a village in northern Russia. In 2022, **Connecticut** recorded 67 cases of bears breaking into homes.

Experts say that we should not be surprised. Bears are thought to be among the cleverest animals: as clever as apes and monkeys and cleverer than dogs.

They have the largest brains, compared to their size, of any land **mammal**. They are very clever at hiding from hunters and can open lots of "bear-proof" boxes.

Is an average bear cleverer than most humans?

Some say

Yes! Bears can remember where they got their food from for as long as 10 years. They can also find their way around without maps and phones.

Others think

No! Experts say they are about as clever as a three-year-old human child. People have clearly achieved much more than bears.

Some people say

"We talk of wild animals, but the wildest animal is man."

GK Chesterton (1874 – 1936), English writer

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What do you think?

Six steps to discovery

1. Connect

How do you feel about this story? - Would you like to meet a bear?

2. Wonder

What questions do you have? - For example: How many kinds of bear are there?

3. Investigate

What are the facts? - Pick out one thing we know for certain and one thing we cannot say for sure from this story.

4. Construct

What is your point of view? - You are invited to design a rubbish bin that bears can open but humans cannot. Think about what you would say.

5. Express

What do others believe? - Which is the most impressive wild animal? Take it in turns to say.

6. Reflect

What might happen next? - Imagine that a bear comes into your school. Write a diary entry about it.

Glossary

Climate change - Long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns. Human action is a major cause of climate change.

Risk - The chance or possibility of something bad happening.

Connecticut - A state in the northeastern USA.

Experts - Someone who knows a lot about a particular subject.

Mammal - A warm-blooded animal where mothers feed young using their own bodies.