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Geographical range

Species of the Day: Asiatic Black Bear

The **Asiatic Black Bear**, ('Moon Bear'), *Ursus thibetanus*, is listed as 'Vulnerable' on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species™. It has a patchy range roughly coinciding with forest distribution from southeastern Iran, through southern and eastern Asia, and northwards to Japan, Korea, and the Russian Far East.

This species has been hunted for millennia for its skin, paws and gall bladder, from which bile is obtained for use in Traditional Chinese Medicine. The illegal killing of bears, combined with extensive habitat loss, is causing rapid and widespread population declines, especially in Southeast Asia and China. The commercial farming of thousands of bears in China and Vietnam for bile extraction, ostensibly to save wild bears, has no demonstrated conservation value.

Although Asiatic Black Bears are legally protected in most of the 18 range countries, poaching (especially by snaring and poisoning) is rampant. These bears are also killed when ransacking crops. The control of poaching and smuggling, and the protection of forest habitats are important conservation priorities, vital to the species' survival.

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