

BEARS

A PC and NPC Sourcebook

“The gypsies believe the bear to be a brother to man because he has the same body beneath his hide, because he drinks beer, because he enjoys music and because he likes to dance.”

— Ernest Hemingway

by MATTHEW GRAVELYN



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INTRODUCTION

The conditions are perfect for tracking. El'zar has been closing in on a herd of elk for hours and is close to claiming his prize. He creeps to the edge of the woods, looking out into a clearing where the elk are drinking from a small stream. He nocks an arrow and takes aim.

Before he can let fly, the peaceful scene is shattered by elk frantically dashing in all directions. At the center of the chaos is a massive bear who has killed a large buck with a single swipe of his powerful claw. As he stands over his kill he picks up a foreign scent. His eyes pierce the veil of the forest, directly to where El'zar is frozen in place. The bear hoists his full 800 pounds up, and lets out a deafening roar. El'zar holds his bow, trembling. His next decision may be his last...

PLAYING A BEAR

For those looking to experience a different style of play, I offer you the bear, one of nature's most able predators and an inspiring creature to behold.

For the gamers, this sourcebook will offer the ability to impose fear and violence on their foes or aid their companions with their natural wisdom. For the role players, playing a non-humanoid character with no common language will provide a truly unique experience as they interact with other players and characters.

Whatever your reason for playing a bear, I hope this sourcebook offers some concrete rules so you, your party, and your DM have a framework to explore this new type of character while still adhering to the rules and logic of D&D 5e.



ENLIGHTENED BEARS

As man continues his reign over the bear, some more perceptive people noticed a change in the bears' behavior. Some of these bears would seem to understand the common tongue, even appearing to register intent and body language. This was quickly dismissed by those who had become accustomed to buying and selling bears as it would undoubtedly affect their business.

With or without the permission of the wealthy, there was a definite change in some of these bears. Whether it was an adaptation to help them survive the world of man or simply the natural evolution of the species is unknown, but it is very clear that these "enlightened bears", as they would come to be known, possessed higher reasoning and intelligence than their kin.

Even some wild bears began to share this heightened awareness, feeling a call to adventure and exploration much the same as do the druids and rangers of the land.

Introducing Bears into Your Campaign

There are many ways to explain how a player may have come to play a bear. This sourcebook offers a few suggestions including bears captured by man only to escape, and those bears who have made a natural bond with a small group of humans who show respect for nature.

You should feel free to create alternate explanations for this bear's prowess and understanding. Perhaps someone has been cursed by an archdruid into the shape of a bear for their crimes against nature, or a hermit discovered a way to commune with nature and transcend his human form. Whatever you decide, you'll probably have to encourage the other players to embrace playing alongside a bear.

For more ideas for your bear's background, see **Appendix B: Enlightened Backgrounds**.

BEARS AND MAN

For most people a bear is usually seen as a rug or a wall hanging. Bears may also be found featured in traveling circuses or in the personal collections of the wealthy as an attraction for their guests. Wherever they are found, bears are usually viewed as the property of man and not as the natural wonder that they are.

This has led to the industry of hunting and capturing bears for profit. Along with this trend has come the propaganda that bears are a violent menace, a terrible creature lurking in the dark who comes to kill and eat innocent families while they sleep in their beds. This vilification has created a very strained relationship between bears the races of man.

For the bears who are not killed outright, they are forever altered and shaped by their captors. They are made to entertain their captors for fear of starvation and torture. While their lives are rough, they can't help but retain the skills they are being taught, not only performance but also insight into the minds of their captors. What do they find entertaining or frightening? How can they use that knowledge to their benefit? Perhaps this is how some bears seem to escape captivity in inexplicable ways.

BEAR NAMES

Bears have a natural name in the sense that creatures can signal their intent to communicate with them. This name is an utterance, gesture, or both. It may also be different depending on the species of creature naming them.

As some bears tend towards the civilized world, they may give themselves a new name to distinguish themselves from the bears of the wild. These names are referred to by druids as "enlightened names" and can range from human words the bear has learned or an altogether new word of their invention.

Bears who are taken as companions by friendly humanoids and those captured for display or performance may have a man-given name. Through repeated use this name is understood by the bear, but the bear may view its usage as endearing, annoying, or even as an insult.

BEARS AS NPCs

While many of the locations players will explore are wild and untamed, it's still not common to see a bear in a domesticated capacity. More times than not, a tamed bear will appear in a traveling circus or a rich noble's menagerie, but bears are sometimes the companion of rangers and druids who prefer a life in the wilds.

To add a bear NPC or enemy to your campaign, refer to **Appendix A: Bears as NPCs** for quick stat blocks for each of the four subraces of bears featured here.

USING THIS SOURCEBOOK

Creating a bear as a player character will be mostly familiar to players, but some unique changes were needed to make the bear class feel intuitive. Here are a few changes to the classic character creation that players should note before diving in.

- Hit points are dependent on the race of the bear, not the class. This information has been moved to the race section for each type of bear.
- Bears are obviously quite different than the humanoid races. Therefore, players who choose to create a bear character should not multiclass outside of the classes presented in this source-book without express permission from your DM.



RACES

URSA MINOR

The term “small” is a bit of a misnomer in the case of ursa minor. While smaller than their cousins, ursa major, these bears are still quite imposing. What they lack in sheer brute force they make up for in speed and dexterity. Do not be fooled, however, they are still extremely strong and can be quite deadly.

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

The smaller bears tend to be more communal than their larger relatives, ranging from a single family to a pack of many bears rearing their young together. When the young bears reach adolescence, they begin to learn their hunting skills through playing with their siblings and cousins. These mock fights may look like simple rivalry, but are honing them into perfect predators.

COMMUNAL LIVING

Due to their early and continued communal life, these bears tend more toward companionship with not only other bears and creatures, but even with humanoid they deem to be deserving. These are often the bears that are found by the side of a ranger or guiding a druid through the forest.

This willingness and desire to be with others is sometimes to the detriment of the bear. This trust can be exploited by those who would seek to do so and often leads these bears to their death or, worse, their captivity.

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice: 1d10 per level

Hit Points at 1st Level: 10 + your Constitution modifier

Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d10 (or 6) + your Constitution modifier per level after 1st

URSA MINOR TRAITS

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 2.

Age. These bears reach maturity by 4 or 5 years of age. Most live to their early- to mid-20s, but some are known to live until 30 years old.

Alignment. Bears, like most natural creatures, tend towards being neutral or chaotic neutral. They have intense survival instincts that will always overrule a “greater good”. However, as companions of humanoids, or merely tolerant of them, some bears could be considered neutral good or chaotic good, opting to put themselves in harm’s way for an individual or small group they deem as part of their pack.

Size. Males can weigh anywhere between 200 and 500 pounds depending on their lifestyle and eating habits. Females weigh between 100 and 400 pounds. Both stand between 2 and 3 feet tall at the shoulder. Your size is Medium.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 30 feet.

Keen Sense. When you make a Wisdom (Perception) check based on smell, you are considered proficient in Perception and add double your proficiency bonus, instead of your normal proficiency bonus.

Natural Camouflage. You can attempt to hide without cover if you are in natural surroundings and your fur coloring is reasonably close to what is around you.

Languages. You can speak and understand Natural, a language of guttural utterances and chirping signals used by all animals. When conversing in Natural, you gain only an outline of what the speaker intends, such as a warning of danger, a threat, or an agreement of peace. As an animal, any humanoid that can speak to animals can converse with you in a more detailed manner.

Subrace. Two main subraces of Ursa Minor are the Black and Kodiak bears. Choose one of these subraces.

BLACK BEAR

These are the smallest bears but also the quickest. Black bears are ferocious in combat for their size but are also able to outrun and evade their foes when beneficial.

Ability Score Increase. Your Dexterity score increases by 1.

Light Paw. Your base walking speed increases to 40 feet.

Claws for Climbing. Your small but powerful frame makes it easy for you to scale irregular surfaces, like trees, wooden buildings, or rough stone walls. You have a climbing speed of 30 feet.

KODIAK BEAR

Kodiak bears are a heartier cousin of the black bear with the stamina to endure a fight instead of running from it. Kodiaks are also more active at night than other bears, lending them a greater affinity for hunting in low light.

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 1.

Hearty. You are used to enduring in the worst of conditions. You have advantage on saving throws against poison, and you have resistance against poison damage.

Bulky. As a bulkier species of bear, you stand out more in a crowd. Your size increases Large.

Darkvision. As a more nocturnal species, you are well-suited for seeing in the dark. You can see in dim light within 60 feet of you as if it were bright light, and in darkness as if it were dim light. You can't discern color in darkness, only shades of grey.



URSA MAJOR

There are bears that are known to the civilized races only in song and legend. So monstrous and powerful are these creatures that to look upon one is akin to stumbling into a dragon's lair. While these enormous bears are not indestructible, they are not far from it.

A SOLITARY LIFE

For most their lives, ursa major spends its time alone, only coming together with other bears as a coincidence of ample food supply and more intentionally for mating. The bulk of their time is spent alone.

Though they are not territorial in a protective sense, they do tend to stay within a range that they prefer, whether that is based on food supply

or simply preference. Sometimes man will encroach on their range, the resulting encounters of which range from indifference to aggression.

CAUTIOUS CURIOSITY

Despite their oafish appearance, these large bears are quite smart and have very good memories. When something new is discovered, like a human in their range or some strange artifact, they will initially respond with fear and caution, but then transition to investigating the new item until they are satisfied with understanding it.

This initial caution can, if further provoked, lead to an aggressive response. Large bears value their privacy and will respond appropriately if they feel threatened. However, with enough time and space, it is possible that they will eventually become accustomed to the presence of man and even coexist.

HIT POINTS

Hit Dice: 1d12 per level

Hit Points at 1st Level: 12 + your Constitution modifier

Hit Points at Higher Levels: 1d12 (or 7) + your Constitution modifier per level after 1st

URSA MAJOR TRAITS

Ability Score Increase. Your Constitution score increases by 2.

Age. These large bears reach maturity by 5 years of age. Most live to their early- to mid-20s, but some are known to live until 30 years old.

Alignment. Bears, like most natural creatures, tend towards being neutral or chaotic neutral. They have intense survival instincts that will always overrule a "greater good". However, as companions of humanoids, or merely tolerant of them, some bears could be considered neutral good or chaotic good, opting to put themselves in harm's way for an individual or small group they deem as part of their pack.

Size. Males weigh between 600 and 800 pounds, with some reaching as much as 900 pounds, and stand 4.5 feet tall at the shoulder. Females are roughly half the weight of the males and stand 3.5 feet tall. Your size is Large.

Speed. Your base walking speed is 25 feet.

Imposing Presence. Your sheer size and dominating presence aid you when trying to frighten or intimidate your foes. You gain proficiency in the Intimidation skill. Whenever you make a Charisma (Intimidation) check add double your proficiency bonus, instead of your normal proficiency bonus.

Tough Skin. You have resistance against bludgeoning damage.

Languages. You can speak and understand Natural, a language of guttural utterances and chirping signals used by all animals. When conversing in Natural, you gain only an outline of what the speaker intends, such as a warning of danger, a threat, or an agreement of peace. As an animal, any humanoid that can speak to animals can converse with you in a more detailed manner.

Subrace. Two main subraces of Ursa Major are the Grizzled and Winter bears. Choose one of these subraces.

GRIZZLED BEAR

The grizzled bear is the fiercest and deadliest bear known to man. This incredibly large and powerful beast is pure muscle and full of fury, making it one of nature's greatest killers. They are quick to anger and their first instinct is always to defend themselves to the death, usually of those who provoked them.

Ability Score Increase. Your Strength score increases by 1.

Hardened Skin. Your lifetime of combat, whether from natural hunting or human manipulation, has given you a hide as strong as armor. You have resistance against slashing damage.

Grappler. Your size and strength give you power over anyone or anything that comes within arm's reach. Targets of your grapple have disadvantage on their Strength (Athletics) check to resist or escape your grapple.

WINTER BEAR

These majestic bears are usually only found in the coldest climates, making them highly prized by hunters and collectors. Few have ever been seen in the wild outside of snowy regions. When they are glimpsed by man, they inspire a mix of fear and reverence, their white fur almost radiating with light.

Ability Score Increase. Your snow-white fur makes you akin to a mythical creature. Your Charisma score increases by 1.

Aquatic. Living on ice sometimes means getting wet. You have a swim speed of 15 feet.

Frost Fur. You have advantage on saving throws against cold, and you have resistance against cold damage.

Cloaked in Snow. Your fur is perfectly suited to blend in with snowy surroundings. When you make a Dexterity (Stealth) check to hide in snowy or icy conditions, you are considered proficient in Stealth and add double your proficiency bonus, instead of your normal proficiency bonus.



CLASSES

FERAL

You have no master but yourself and nature, and even nature can be bested. You are a product of your wild heritage, and yet you are compelled to leave your home for a greater purpose. While you may wander to the civilized corners of the world, you carry your natural instincts with you as you bring nature's order to the chaos sown by men.

NATURALLY DEADLY

The bear is one of nature's perfect predators. Armed not only with the teeth and claws, but their imposing size and speed are often an unwelcome surprise to their prey. This lethal combination of speed and power makes the bear a fearsome foe to even the most seasoned of warrior.

Some bears use these skills for simple hunting and protection, but the enlightened bears of the world have seen fit to hone these predatory instincts like a fighter would sharpen his sword. No longer content to be hunted for sport and sold into slavery, these bears are nature's weapon against all mankind.

THE LAST STRAW

At some point in their young life, there was a defining moment that led this bear on a path of violence. This might have been when their mate was taken from them by man or when they had to choose between being hunter or prey.

Whatever set them on their path, the feral bear is now a finely-tuned killer, willing to use every ounce of their strength fighting to protect what is most important to them.

CREATING A FERAL BEAR

While the feral bear may seem like an agent of chaos and destruction, they are guided by the natural order and preserving what they believe to be sacred. Tempering their violence with a reverence of nature will be the defining trait that sets this bear apart from another animal in a fury.

The bear is not on a quest like a paladin, but there is loss at the core of their being. They may be seeking to rectify this loss in a literal way, like finding their captured mate, or in a spiritual way,

such as making sure those who exploit the natural world are punished. Whatever the motivation, there is meaning and order at the center of the feral bear's fury.

CLASS FEATURES

PROFICIENCIES

Weapons: Bite, Swipe, Slam

Saving Throws: Strength, Constitution

Skills: Choose two skills from Animal Handling, Athletics, Intimidation, Nature, Perception, and Survival

OFFENSIVE ATTRIBUTES

Instead of traditional weapons, the feral bear uses their natural adaptations for dealing with threats in combat.

Bite: 1d8 piercing, finesse

Swipe: 1d8 slashing, finesse

Slam: 1d6 bludgeoning

| The Feral | | |
|-----------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| Level | Proficiency Bonus | Features |
| 1st | +2 | Thick Hide, Second Wind |
| 2nd | +2 | Recklessness, Primal Fury |
| 3rd | +2 | Improved Critical |
| 4th | +2 | Ability Score Improvement |
| 5th | +3 | Extra Attack |
| 6th | +3 | Ability Score Improvement |
| 7th | +3 | Feral Reflexes |
| 8th | +3 | Ability Score Improvement |
| 9th | +4 | Defy Death |
| 10th | +4 | Superior Critical |
| 11th | +4 | Extra Attack |
| 12th | +4 | Ability Score Improvement |
| 13th | +5 | Indomitable |
| 14th | +5 | Ability Score Improvement |
| 15th | +5 | Devastating Critical |
| 16th | +5 | Ability Score Improvement |
| 17th | +6 | Primal Might |
| 18th | +6 | Ability Score Improvement |
| 19th | +6 | Survivor |
| 20th | +6 | Extra Attack |

THICK HIDE

You are seasoned by life in the wild and have a natural defense against physical attacks. While wearing no armor, your Armor Class equals 10 + your Dexterity modifier + your Constitution modifier.

SECOND WIND

Your stamina reserves are far beyond that of man and other creatures of the wilds. On your turn, you can use a bonus action to regain hit points equal to 1d10 + your feral level.

Once you use this feature, you must complete a short or long rest before you can use it again.

RECKLESSNESS

Starting at 2nd level, you can let your wild instinct take over without regard for safety. When you make your first attack on your turn, you can decide to attack recklessly. If you do, you gain advantage on all attack rolls using Strength during this turn, but attack rolls against you also have advantage until your next turn.

PRIMAL FURY

By 2nd level, when you have half or less Hit Points, you gain your Proficiency Bonus to all melee attack damage rolls.

IMPROVED CRITICAL

Starting at 3rd level, melee attack rolls can score a critical hit on a roll of 19 or 20.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT

When you reach certain levels noted in the Feral table, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores by 1. You cannot increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

Alternatively, when you reach one of the noted levels, you can forgo improving any of your ability scores to take a feat.

EXTRA ATTACK

Beginning at 5th level, you can attack one extra time whenever you take the attack action on your turn. If you haven't used your whole move for the turn, you can move between your attacks.

When you reach 11th level, this feature gives you 2 extra attacks, instead of 1. When you reach 20th level, this feature gives you 3 extra attacks, instead of 2.

FERAL REFLEXES

By 7th level, your instincts are so honed that if you are surprised while you are conscious, you can take a turn during the surprise round.

DEFY DEATH

Once you reach 9th level, you can rally yourself despite grievous injuries.

When you are reduced to 0 hit points but are not killed outright, you can make a DC 15 Constitution saving throw. If you succeed, you are instead reduced to 1 hit point.

SUPERIOR CRITICAL

Starting at 10th level, your melee attacks can score a critical hit on a roll of 18-20.

INDOMITABLE

Beginning at 13th level, you have advantage on all saving throws. A combination of cunning, battle experience, and a dash of luck guard you from harm.

DEVASTATING CRITICAL

Beginning at 15th level, when you score a critical hit against a creature, you can impose an additional effect on the target if the attack deals damage to it. The damage's type determines the effect. A target is immune to the additional effect if they have resistance or are immune to the type of damage.

Bludgeoning. The target must make a

Constitution saving throw with a DC of 10 + your Strength modifier. On a failure, the target is stunned until the end of its next turn.

Slashing. The target's speed drops to 0 until the end of its next turn as your attack hamstringing it or causes a vexing wound.

Piercing. The target suffers a nagging wound.

Until the target is healed or drops to 0 hit points, it takes damage at the end of each of its turns. The damage equals 1d6 + half your fighter level. The target or a creature within 5 feet can end this damage by using its action to tend to the wound.

PRIMAL MIGHT

Beginning at 17th level, if your total for a Strength check is less than your Strength score, you can use that score in place of the total rolled.

SURVIVOR

At 19th level, you have attained the pinnacle of resilience in battle. At the start of each of your turns, you regain hit points equal to 5 + your Constitution modifier if you have half or fewer of your hit points. You don't gain this benefit if you are at 0 hit points.

HUNTER

You see the hidden trails of the forest. You know why elk run the way they do and can even predict where to stand to catch one off guard. You understand the natural world in a way that is surprising even to you, but it's there, just like knowing how to breath. You are a hunter.

BETTER TOGETHER

While most men have proven themselves to be violent, selfish, and with little regard for nature, you see that this is not always the case. There are those among the humanoid races who possess a bond with nature and the creatures of the world. You seek out these kindred souls and aid them in their endeavors.

The hunter bear is a competent fighter alone but their true potential shines when they are alongside their trusted companions in combat. They know how best to work with their allies to create distractions, avoid attacks, and strike at the most opportune moment to defeat their enemies.

UNNATURAL WISDOM

Your eyes shine with uncommon wisdom for a bear. You assess every aspect of your surroundings and understand that even the smallest detail holds meaning. Tracking prey for you is more than simply following a scent, but also understanding how your quarry thinks and acts. They never anticipate you in time, and this is ultimately their downfall.

Your heightened understanding comes from many sources, including your own experiences in the wild. More recently though are your

encounters with man, both friend and foe, and how they behave. Using this attention to detail, you can exploit every crack in your opponent's defense.

CREATING A HUNTER BEAR

The defining feature of a hunter bear is in their relationships. Whether your alliances are more of convenience or true friendship, you know how to use your skills to aid those around you, protect them from harm, and see them through a battle.

The hunter is so named for his similarities to human hunters and trackers, but bears do not use these skills for personal gain or glory. Instead, they make sure they keep their allies out of harm's way and, should the need arise to overcome an enemy, they will be in the thick of it, embodying the full intensity of nature itself.

CLASS FEATURES

| The Hunter | | |
|------------|-------------|---------------------------|
| | Proficiency | |
| Level | Bonus | Features |
| 1st | +2 | Easy Prey, Territory |
| 2nd | +2 | Combat Companion |
| 3rd | +2 | Primeval Awareness |
| 4th | +2 | Ability Score Improvement |
| 5th | +3 | Living Shield |
| 6th | +3 | Know Your Enemy |
| 7th | +3 | Easy Prey Improvement |
| 8th | +3 | Ability Score Improvement |
| 9th | +4 | Living Shield Improve. |
| 10th | +4 | Foraged Camouflage |
| 11th | +4 | Multiattack |
| 12th | +4 | Ability Score Improvement |
| 13th | +5 | Living Shield Improve. |
| 14th | +5 | Easy Prey Improvement |
| 15th | +5 | Feral Dominance |
| 16th | +5 | Ability Score Improvement |
| 17th | +6 | Superior Defense |
| 18th | +6 | Feral Senses |
| 19th | +6 | Ability Score Improvement |
| 20th | +6 | Apex Predator |

PROFICIENCIES

Weapons: Bite, Swipe

Saving Throws: Dexterity, Wisdom

Skills: Choose three skills from Acrobatics, Animal Handling, Nature, Perception, Stealth, and Survival

OFFENSIVE ATTRIBUTES

Instead of traditional weapons, the hunter bear uses their natural adaptations for dealing with threats in combat.

Bite: 1d8 piercing, finesse

Swipe: 1d8 slashing, finesse

EASY PREY

Beginning at 1st level, you have much experience tracking and hunting a certain type of enemy. This may be a preferred source of food or a creature you were trained to hunt.

Choose a type of prey: beasts, fey, humanoids, monstrosities, or undead. You gain +2 bonus to damage rolls against this type of enemy. You also have advantage on Wisdom (Survival) checks to track your prey, as well as on Intelligence checks to recall information about them.

When you gain this feature, you also can understand the general intention of their primary language, whether they mean you harm or fear you, for example.

You choose one additional prey, as well as an associated language, at 7th and 14th level. As you gain levels, your choices should reflect the types of monsters you have encountered on your adventures.

TERRITORY

You have spent much time hunting and surviving in a variety of environments and claim them all as your home

In combat, you gain the following benefits:

- You have advantage on initiative rolls.
- On your first turn during combat, you have advantage on attack rolls against enemies that have not yet acted.

When traveling, you gain the following benefits:

- Difficult terrain doesn't slow your group.
- Your group can't become lost except by magical means.

- Even when you are engaged in another activity while traveling you remain alert to danger.
- If you travel alone, you can move stealthily at a normal pace.
- When you forage or hunt, you find twice as much food as you normally would.
- While tracking other creatures, you also learn their exact number, their sizes, and how long ago they passed through the area.

COMBAT COMPANION

At 2nd level, as you work closely with your new companions you begin to understand each other's body language and fighting styles more intimately. You know how best to add your own battle prowess to devastating effect.

When an ally attacks a target within 10 feet of you, they gain advantage on their first melee attack roll if the enemy is one of your chosen prey.

When attacking a target that one of your allies has already successfully hit this turn, you gain advantage on all melee attack rolls.

PRIMEVAL AWARENESS

Beginning at 3rd level, your time in the wilds have honed your senses to a supernatural level.

You have an innate ability to communicate with beasts, and they recognize you as a kindred spirit. Through sounds and gestures, you can communicate simple ideas to a beast as an action, and can read its basic mood and intent. You learn its emotional state, whether it is affected by magic of any sort, its short-term needs (such as food or safety), and actions you can take (if any) to persuade it to not attack.

You cannot use this ability against a creature that you have attacked within the past 10 minutes.

Additionally, you can attune your senses to determine if any of your chosen prey are nearby. By spending 1 uninterrupted minute in concentration you can sense whether any of your prey are present within 5 miles of you. This feature reveals which of your prey are present, their numbers, and the creatures' general direction and distance (in miles) from you.

If there are multiple groups of your chosen prey within range, you learn this information for each group.

ABILITY SCORE IMPROVEMENT

When you reach certain levels noted in the Hunter table, you can increase one ability score of your choice by 2, or you can increase two ability scores by 1. You cannot increase an ability score above 20 using this feature.

LIVING SHIELD

By 5th level your allies are becoming more important to you despite your reservations with befriending man. You see inherent value in them and will do what you can to help them survive.

Once per turn when an enemy attacks an ally within 10 feet, you can use this feature to distract or taunt the enemy, adding +1 to your ally's AC. You must decide to use this feature before the enemy's attack roll is revealed. If the attack hits, your ally takes full damage and you take half damage, rounded down.

The bonus you provide to an ally's AC is increased to +2 at 9th level and +3 at 13th level.

KNOW YOUR ENEMY

By 6th level you have tracked and studied many of your chosen prey. You can anticipate their every move and have the upper hand. You gain advantage on all saving throws against your chosen prey.

FORAGED CAMOUFLAGE

Starting at 10th level, you can spend 1 minute rolling in the dirt, sticks, or leaves to blend in with your surroundings. You must have reasonable access to enough material to fully cover your body.

Once you have created camouflaged, you can hide by laying or leaning against a solid object that is of similar covering as your camouflage and is at least as tall and wide as you are. You gain a +10 bonus to Dexterity (Stealth) checks if you remain motionless and make no actions. Once you move or take an action, you must camouflage yourself again to gain this benefit.

MULTIATTACK

At 11th level, choose one of the following features:

Whirlwind. You can use your action to make melee attacks against any number of creatures within 5 feet of you, with a separate attack roll for each target.

Grappler. Whenever you attempt to grapple a target, you automatically succeed. You can choose to grapple two targets instead by succeed an attack roll.

FERAL DOMINANCE

When you reach 15th level, your dominance over the natural world has been established. Other natural creatures and plants become hesitant to attack or impede you.

When a natural creature attacks you, they must succeed a Wisdom saving throw against a DC that is equal to 10 + Charisma modifier + your proficiency bonus. If they fail, they must choose a different target or the attack misses. If they succeed, they are immune to this for 24 hours.

Creatures are aware of this effect before they attack you.

SUPERIOR DEFENSE

By 17th level, the bond you share with your allies has grown from a friendship of opportunity to mutual respect. You will leap to their aid in combat with little regard for your own safety and bolster them when they fight alongside you.

You gain the following features:

- You and allies within 30 feet of you have advantage on all saving throws
- Opportunity attacks made against you and allies within 10 feet are made with disadvantage.

FERAL SENSES

At 18th level, you are completely attuned to the physical world around you. The smallest disturbance around you will alert you to the presence of invisible threats. You do not suffer disadvantage when attacking an invisible enemy.

You can also sense the location of invisible enemies within 30 feet of you as long as they are not hidden or you are blind or deafened.

APEX PREDATOR

At 20th level, you have become the perfect predator of your chosen prey. Once per turn you can add your Wisdom modifier to either an attack roll or a damage roll against one of your chosen prey. You may choose to use this feature after you roll the dice, but before any effects of the roll are applied.

BACKGROUNDS

Where the bear came from will always be the first question that comes to mind when you encounter new people. There is obviously a rich backstory that would lead a bear to behave this way, and the common folk of the realm are nothing if not curious for a good story.

Following are suggested backgrounds that can be used when playing a bear. You can also use a background from the Player's Handbook that makes sense, or work with your DM to create one.

CAPTIVE PERFORMER

Man's need to own has no boundary when it comes to other creatures. You are no more alive than their dining table, but you will perform for their liking or you may find yourself in an even worse position.

Whether you were part of a traveling group of performers or secreted away in a lavish estate entertaining party guests, your life revolved around making people feel fear, wonder, or both. Over time you have learned to intuit what audiences want and how to sway them if needed.

Perhaps you were freed by an altruistic noble or maybe you escaped captivity, on your own or with some help. Either way, you'll never be able to forget your time as a performer, but at least it may come to your aid at some point.

Skill Proficiencies: Insight, Performance

Languages: You can understand one additional language, usually the primary language of your captors or audience.

FEATURE: LARGE PRESENCE

Your years as an entertainer have taught you how to play on the emotions, fears, and desires of man. You can use your size, ferocity, and mystique to add effect to your allies' attempts to beguile and sway those around you.

When you use this feature, choose one skill: Diplomacy, Intimidation, Performance, or Persuasion. For the next 10 minutes, all allies within 30 feet of you may add your proficiency bonus to their checks with the chosen skill. Targets of failed checks are immune to this affect for 24 hours.

PROTECTOR

In your past, you once met a person of the humanoid races. Your shared experience touched you both in a profound and permanent way. Despite the time and distance between, you two are distinctly bonded to each other. You would do anything for each other.

Create a back story about how you met this person. Perhaps you saved a hunter's life, saved a young girl from harm, or befriended a wandering hermit during his seclusion. Maybe you were the one who was saved by a passerby who freed you from a trap or cage. The encounter was almost spiritual. This will be the person with whom you share this bond.

Skill Proficiencies: Nature, Survival

Languages: You can understand one additional language, usually the primary language of your bond.

FEATURE: ENDURING BOND

You have formed an extremely personal bond with a person from your past through a shared hardship or a selfless act of kindness. This person will always recognize you and give you every kindness and support they possibly can, even to their detriment. They will provide food and shelter for you and your party and even hide you from enemies. They will not fight with you and the bond can be broken if you abuse it.

In addition, your bond seems to transcend the physical realm. You can sense when this person is near and if they are hurt or in danger. They can sense the same about you and will act accordingly.



LOCAL LEGEND

Maybe it's because they were a small, secluded group, or maybe there truly is something remarkable about you. Either way, you are the stuff of legend in a remote corner of the world. Sightings of you are quickly transmitted through town gossip and people spend days on end trying to catch a glimpse of you.

Whether you are a god to them or an omen of things to come, your presence is always met with an extreme reaction. Create a town, religion, or culture that recognizes you as legend. They will always recognize you and act accordingly.

Skill Proficiencies: History, Intimidation

Languages: You can understand one additional language, usually the primary language of the tribe or town you are from.

FEATURE: AWE INSPIRING

To anyone from the group to which you are a local legend or other historians who may know of you, you are a mythical creature. Pick a defining feature that sets you apart from other bears, like a distinct scar, unnatural coloring, or other cosmetic change. Alternatively, you could choose a great deed as your defining characteristic.

When you are recognized as a legend, you will be shown all possible aid. You will be housed and fed. You will be protected from harm to the best of their ability. People will lie to protect your whereabouts and help conceal your passing.



APPENDIX A: BEARS AS NPCs

Black Bear

Medium beast, unaligned

Armor Class 11 (natural armor)

Hit Points 21 (3d8 + 6)

Speed 40 ft., climb 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 15 (+2) | 12 (+1) | 14 (+2) | 2 (-4) | 12 (+1) | 7 (-2) |

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages ----

Challenge 1/2 (100 XP)

Keen Smell. The bear has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Actions

Multiattack. The bear makes two attacks, one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 4 (1d6) slashing damage.

Kodiak Bear

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 12 (natural armor)

Hit Points 36 (4d10 + 12)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 16 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 15 (+3) | 2 (-4) | 13 (+1) | 7 (-2) |

Skills Perception +3

Senses darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 13

Languages ----

Challenge 1 (200 XP)

Keen Sight and Smell. The bear has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on sight or smell.

Actions

Multiattack. The bear makes two attacks, one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 1) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 6 (1d8 + 1) slashing damage.



Winter Bear

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 13 (natural armor)

Hit Points 45 (5d10 + 15)

Speed 30 ft., swim 20 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|---------|
| 17 (+3) | 10 (+0) | 16 (+3) | 2 (-4) | 13 (+1) | 12 (+1) |

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages ----

Challenge 2 (450 XP)

Keen Smell. The bear has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Thick Hide. The bear has resistance to bludgeoning damage.

Actions

Multiattack. The bear makes two attacks, one with its bite and one with its claws.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d8) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +3 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (2d8) slashing damage.

Grizzled Bear

Large beast, unaligned

Armor Class 14 (natural armor)

Hit Points 63 (7d10 + 21)

Speed 30 ft.

| STR | DEX | CON | INT | WIS | CHA |
|---------|---------|---------|--------|---------|--------|
| 19 (+4) | 10 (+0) | 16 (+3) | 2 (-4) | 13 (+1) | 7 (-2) |

Skills Perception +3

Senses passive Perception 13

Languages ----

Challenge 4 (1,100 XP)

Keen Smell. The bear has advantage on Wisdom (Perception) checks that rely on smell.

Hardened Hide. The bear has resistance to bludgeoning and slashing damage.

Trample. If the bear moves at least 20 feet straight toward a creature and hits them with a slam attack, the target must succeed a Dexterity saving throw or be knocked prone in addition to taking damage.

Grappler. Instead of an attack, the bear can choose to attempt to grapple a creature. The target of the bears grapple has disadvantage on their Strength (Athletics) check to resist or escape the grapple.

Actions

Multiattack. The bear makes two attacks.

Bite. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d8) piercing damage.

Claws. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d8) slashing damage.

Slam. *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 15 (3d8) bludgeoning damage.



APPENDIX B: ENLIGHTENED BACKSTORIES

When it comes to your bear character, the sky's the limit for rationalizing where your bear comes from and what makes him or her different from all other wild bears. With this sourcebook, special attention should be paid to explaining where or how your bear character learned to behave the way he or she does. Hand waving an intelligent beast may cause the fiction to crumble for the whole party.

If you're having trouble coming up with a compelling origin story, or need a jumping off point, here are a few suggestions to help you get started.

A NATURAL SPIRIT

There are many places that man does not tread nor even understands. These are natural places, truly the essence of whatever higher being may have created this land. Some people are touched by this essence, and understand how to walk between the planes of existence through study and practice. Beasts, on the other hand, are sometimes born of this essence, and have some of that wisdom deep inside themselves.

If you'd like your bear to be more supernatural, involve some story about the Fey or other power or being that has touched you. Perhaps you are aware of this gift or maybe you simply don't know any different. You have a higher consciousness than other beast and that has lead you to the world of man. This can be out of curiosity or as a protector of the natural order. This background may even help you connect with other characters who are Fey-touched or sensitive to the higher planes of existence.

EVOLUTIONARY IMPERATIVE

It is no secret that man is a greedy creature and they often take from nature what they want without regard for the creatures left behind. As with all threats, nature has a way of evolving and growing, protecting itself as a collection of creatures. This could explain your seemingly

unnatural wisdom and prowess in battle. Perhaps you are the protector of the natural order.

While a far cry from the usual course of evolution, usually taking millions of years, perhaps in this case an evolutionary leap was what the land needs to protect itself from the onslaught of man and his greed. You are awakened in a way other creatures are not, and within you stirs the deep desire to protect what is good and uphold the balance of nature.

WELL-TRAINED

Your captors, whether they were cruel or kind, taught you well. Not only did you learn tricks and skills unlike those you would naturally have come by, you also learned much about the races of man: what drives them, what entertains them, what frightens them. You have witnessed how they interact, how they fight, and how they live. This knowledge has given greater context to your natural skills and has allowed you to develop an unnatural wisdom.

As a player, come up with a background that involves you being captured or befriended by man, taught their ways, and then some became free again, whether with the blessing of your former master or against their will.

BIZARRE AND UNNATURAL MAGICKS

The world is filled with wild magic and arcane power. While certainly unusual, it wouldn't be outside the realm of possibility that these magics could manifest in the shape of a bear. Some possibilities include:

- You were polymorphed into a bear. This could be due to a failed confrontation with an evil sorcerer or your own attempts at magic going awry.
- You angered a natural god who has cursed you with the form of a bear so you can learn to live in harmony with nature.
- You were once a simple bear like any other, but the magical tampering of a crazed wizard gave you increased cognitive function.

FEEDBACK

Thank you for purchasing this sourcebook! It was a lot of fun to create and now I know way more about bears than I have any right to.

If you have any feedback or suggestions for this sourcebook, please send it to me via email at matthew@gravelyn.com with the subject line "Bear Sourcebook Feedback". Your input will help to make this sourcebook even better for future players!

IMAGE CREDITS

[Cowboys Roping a Bear](#) by James Walker
[Black Bear](#) by Niko Pirosmani
[Parchment Paper](#) by DevonTT

THANK YOU!

Thank you to everyone who helped make this sourcebook the best it could be, either by testing, proofreading, or providing much needed emotional support.

The biggest dedication goes out to Bobby, my good friend who is always pushing the limits of RPGs, both in terms of rules and taste. He came to me during a game we were playing and told me he wanted to play a bear. A literal bear. After an initial sense of dread for what was to come, I did what I could to come up with some rules that would make the bear playable in the world of D&D 5e. Those basic scribbles eventually became this sourcebook. Bobby: thank you for always pushing the envelope.

Below are other testers and editors that I would like to thank:

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