

# Twelve ideas you should know about the Andean bear

By: Team Ingenio

Our guest is endemic to South America and lives in the Andes mountain range. Although males can reach heights of up to 2 meters and weigh up to 200 kilograms, and females 1.5 meters and 100 kilograms, it is highly vulnerable and endangered. Oh, and you can visit it at Parque de la Conservación in Medellín.

- 1** | It's recognized as: Andean bear, South American bear, short-faced bear, or mountain bear, and depending on the region, it's referred to as *jukumari*, *ukumari*, or *ukuku*.
- 2** | Its scientific name is *Tremarctos ornatus*, but we know it as the spectacled bear due to the circular patches some have around their eyes. Their fur is short and brown with small ochre spots on their back, face, and belly. Their markings are unique; no two bears are the same.
- 3** | It's an omnivorous animal. While 90% of its diet consists of plants, it also consumes insects and occasionally eggs and meat from other animals.
- 4** | Despite appearances, they are skilled climbers. They build their beds on trees as high as 15 meters to carry their food, digest, and then take a nap. Unlike other bear species, these bears do not hibernate.

A female gives birth to two to four cubs per pregnancy between the months of April and June. The mother accompanies her cubs for two years, during which she teaches them everything they need to know to survive.





**5** | They are solitary and shy creatures. When they encounter a threat, their initial response is to flee. However, they often leave messages on trees for other individuals and mark their path with scents or scratches.

**6** | In our country, Colombia's National Natural Parks aim to conserve them in their natural habitat within the mountain range. To achieve this, they work on ecosystem protection and restoration, reducing threats, and minimizing negative interactions within and around the parks.

**7** | For their conservation, it's essential to protect areas ranging from 500 to 3800 meters above sea level, namely Andean forests and paramos where water retention, supply, and CO<sub>2</sub> capture (which aids in mitigating global warming) occur.

**8** | Protecting it involves conserving the species and mountain ecosystems that the Andean bear shares and interacts with. This effort also helps maintain the environmental assets that enhance the quality of life and survival of the species.

**9** | Due to their herbivorous and frugivorous habits (fruit eaters), bears transport seeds within their digestive system over distances that can exceed 54 kilometers. This process aids in forest regeneration and also functions as a pollinator, as they carry pollen from various plants they consume in their fur.

**10** | They inhabit Andean ecosystems such as paramos and high forests in the Central and Eastern mountain ranges of Colombia. They can also be found in Venezuela, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia and Argentina.

**11** | It has been classified as 'vulnerable' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) due to its decreasing population over the decades, as it contends with an increasingly degraded environment caused by agriculture, livestock and infrastructure development.

**12** | There are cultures that believe their claws possess medicinal properties, although this is not scientifically supported. This belief leads to hunting them, posing a threat to their existence.

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These twelve ideas about the Andean bear resulted from an exhaustive search across various sources of public domain information, and benefited from the guidance of experts from the Parque de la Conservación in Medellín. The text was developed, reviewed, and approved by the Editorial Committee of Revista Ingenio.