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### FAST FACTS

**NAME:** Kermode bear (often called spirit bear or ghost bear)  
**SCIENTIFIC NAME:** *Ursus americanus kermodei*

**AVERAGE WEIGHT:** 70 kg (females), 135 kg (males)  
but can reach 290 kg

**SHOULDER HEIGHT:** 100 to 120 cm

**LIFESPAN:** Up to 25 years

**DID YOU KNOW?** This bear is named after Francis Kermode, a provincial museum worker who was among the first to discover the furry fellows.

### PHYSIOLOGY

A Kermode bear is easily recognized by its white fur. Any colour it has comes from dirt picked up while walking and fishing. The bears shed their fur each spring. After that, the fur is particularly white – at least until the bear manages to get it dirty!

Few people realize that all Kermodes are actually black bears. The famous white fur comes from a recessive gene. Both parent bears must have this gene for their cub to be white. It is the same phenomenon occurring in human genes for blue eyes or red hair.

The bear's claws are dull white. Just like a black bear, a Kermode's nose and paws are dark brown or black, so it is incorrect to call a Kermode an albino.

### HABITAT/BEHAVIOUR

These bears live in coastal rainforests on the islands off British Columbia's coast. The kind of pristine rainforests the Kermode prefers is pretty rare!

Much like their relatives, they snuggle down for winter. They lounge in a den, under a tree or among fallen tree roots. Gigantic cedars provide the ideal home.

For a snack, a Kermode will eat plants. It eats berries when available and salmon is a key part of their diet. During certain months, salmon is plentiful in the rivers throughout the Kermode range; although, human activity in some locations has harmed salmon populations.

Few Kermodes have been exposed to humans, so they have no reason to fear them. If tourists become too plentiful, however, that might change.

### RANGE

The Kermode lives only in Canada, and can be found between the Burke Channel in the south and roughly up to the Nass River in the north. Although, no one is sure exactly how far north Kermodes roam.

Two islands host the largest number of white Kermodes: Princess Royal and Gribbell. Scientists say the recessive white genes have survived here because the islands are isolated and have a small bear population.