

# The Washington Post

Hot Topics Toomer's Corner Bahrain Solar flare Cassy Herkelman Adrienne Palicki Wisconsin protests Carolyn Hax



PROGRESS IS EVERYONE'S BUSINESS  
See how Goldman Sachs brings together people, capital and ideas to help clients and support communities. [Learn More](#)

washingtonpost.com > Nation > Science News

FOLLOW THE POST ON:

THIS STORY: [READ +](#) | [WATCH +](#) | [Comments](#)

Advertisement

More news from: [Science](#) | [Environment](#) | [Health](#)

## Bear hibernation study finds surprises in search for clues to help human health

By [Brian Vastag](#)

Washington Post Staff Writer

Thursday, February 17, 2011; 4:22 PM

Call this study "Big Brother" black bear.

### THIS STORY

- [GRAPHIC: Bears slow down, but stay warm](#)
- [It's a snoozer: Hibernation slows bears more than we thought](#)
- » Bear hibernation study finds surprises in search for clues to help human health

VIDEO

CH. 02 02-27-04 00:54:28

**It's a snoozer: Hibernation slows bears more than we thought**

An infrared camera captures an Alaskan black bear in deep hibernation. For the first time, researchers watched bears slumber all winter, discovering that the famous hibernators maintain a relatively high body temperature even as their breathing, heart rate, and metabolism drop far below normal.

» [LAUNCH VIDEO PLAYER](#)

In the woods of Alaska, five black bears snoozed all winter while researchers recorded every detail of their slow-motion daily drama for the first time.

Cameras caught them shuffling around every day or so.

Oxygen and carbon dioxide monitors kept tabs on their metabolism.

And sensors implanted in their abdomens recorded their heart rate and breathing.

It's more than reality show contestants usually have to put up with.

And yet, these scientific stars performed perfectly, offering an unprecedented glimpse into the secrets of hibernation.

Network News [PROFILE](#)

[Recommend](#)

[Tweet](#) 0

[View More Activity](#)

TOOLBOX

[Resize](#) [Print](#) [E-mail](#)

[Yahoo! Buzz](#) [Reprints](#) [f](#)

[COMMENT](#)

FEATURED ADVERTISER LINKS

It turns out that *Ursus americanus* hibernates in a manner unlike that of the dozens of other hibernating mammals. The biologists saw that the animals' heart rate dropped precipitously, they breathed just two or three times a minute and their metabolism slowed to a trickle as the animals slowly burned the fat they spent all summer accumulating.

None of that was unexpected.

And yet, unlike other hibernators such as squirrels, chipmunks, raccoons and skunks, the bears maintained a high body temperature throughout five months of inactivity.

Further, when the bears emerged in mid-April, the researchers got another surprise. Like a fuzzy-headed human waking from a Sunday snooze, the bears stayed groggy, with their metabolic rate remaining at about half that of summer levels for two to three weeks.

"The slow emergence from hibernation was very surprising," said Oivind Toien, a biologist at the Institute of Arctic Biology at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks, who cross-country skied to a control hut near the dens every morning for five months.

CONTINUED 1 2 [Next](#) >

Sponsored Links

[Spinal Stenosis Pain?](#)

See where laser Spine Surgery Began-No Hospitalization!

[Refinance Rates at 2.8%](#)

\$160,000 Mortgage \$434/mo. No Hidden Points/Fees. 3.1% apr Get Quote!

[Groupon.com Official Site](#)

1 huge daily deal on the best stuff to do in your city. Try it today!

[Buy a link here](#)

Network News MY PROFILE

[Recommend](#) [Sign Up](#) to see what your friends recommend.

[Tweet](#) 0

[View More Activity](#)



12

[Share](#)

More ways to share this Article...

[Reddit](#) [Twitter](#)

[myspace](#) [del.icio.us](#)

[NewsTrust](#) [Stumble It!](#)

» THIS STORY: [READ +](#) | [WATCH +](#) | [Comments](#)

From Our Partners

- [How GOP Efforts To Redefine Rape Could Help Democrats Win Back Independent Voters](#)
- [What Not To Say About the Lara Logan Story](#)
- [Cell Phone Taxes Are Insanely, Indefensibly High](#)
- [The True History of How Sane Parents Got Paranoid About Vaccines](#)
- 

0 Comments

BE THE FIRST TO COMMENT

You must be logged in to leave a comment.

[Log in](#) | [Register](#)

[Why Do I Have to Log In Again?](#)

[Discussion Policy](#)

[Mesothelioma, Defective Drugs/Medical Devices, Environmental Pollution, Accidents, Asbestos Cancer, BP Oil Spill](#)

[Medical Malpractice, Personal Injury, Fosamax Femur Fracture, DePuy Hip Replacement, Gas Drilling](#)

[Looking to buy a home? Visit TWP Real Estate section for the latest open houses.](#)

[Enjoy a Taste of Ireland Tour, one week all inclusive from \\$658](#)

[Make Your Vanguard Investing More Profitable - Free Research Report Reveals Best & Worst Funds](#)

Network News MY PROFILE

[Friends' Activity](#) [Most Popular](#)

[Twitter Activity](#)


**Your Friends' Most Recent Activity**


[Create an account](#) or [log in](#) to see what your friends are doing.


[Facebook social plugin](#)


Follow The Post: [f](#) [t](#) [View More Activity](#)

**Featured Stories**

 [SEC suspects an Amish Bernie Madoff](#)

 [Club Wegmans, the supermarket as social hot spot](#)

 [Ken Jennings for 100: What the former champ has to say about Jeopardy, Watson](#)

 [Foreign Policy: U.S. agrees to rebuke Israel at U.N.](#)

**FP Foreign Policy HIGHLIGHTS**

[The Silent Tragedy of China's Mentally](#)