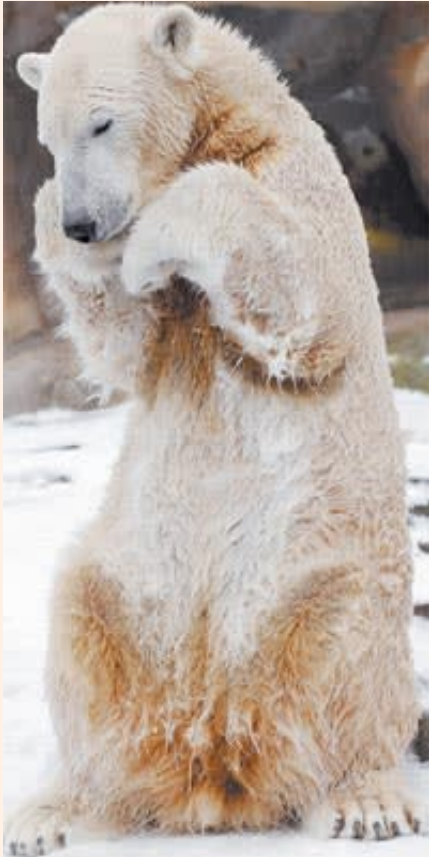


The List: Five bears that made the news

They don't often make the headlines but some of their stories captured the public imagination

Mika Ross-Southall JUNE 23, 2012



Knut, the polar bear

Bears don't often make the headlines. When they do, it's usually bad news. In honour of Taquka – who belongs to the largest sub-species of brown bear and who this week moved to a new home in Sweden, becoming the only Kodiak bear to live outside Alaska – here are five bear stories that have captured the public imagination.

1. Winnie

In 1914 Harry Colebourn, a Canadian soldier, wrote in his diary that he had “bought [a] bear for \$20”, naming it Winnie (after his hometown Winnipeg). Colebourn subsequently travelled across the Atlantic to England, bringing the bear with him and, later, when he was called to serve in the first world war, Winnie was loaned to London Zoo. The bear's unusually tame and affectionate manner allowed zookeepers and visitors to feed her

“cocktails” of condensed milk and honey. A A Milne and his son Christopher Robin were among the visitors, and Winnie was immortalised in the stories of Pooh Bear.

2. Chia Chia and Ching Ching

In 1974, Britain's then prime minister Edward Heath was given a pair of pandas by the Chinese government. At their new home in London Zoo, the pandas were unsuccessful in their attempts to mate and remained without cubs. A more recent attempt at panda diplomacy took place last year with the delivery of Tian Tian and Yang Guang to Edinburgh Zoo but the pair also failed to mate. The press release said simply: “Close

but no cigar.”

3. Mark Wallinger

Mark Wallinger won the Turner Prize in 2007 for his 154-minute video “Sleeper” in which he wore a bear suit and wandered around Berlin’s National Gallery for 10 nights in a row. “It was an exercise in maintaining the attention of the curious,” the artist explained. Members of the public left gifts of honey, and on the seventh night another anonymous human turned up in a bear suit to observe through the gallery windows.

4. Lily

In 2010 Dr Lynn Rogers of the Wildlife Research Institute rigged up a camera at the entrance of Lily the black bear’s winter den in Ely, Minnesota, to capture the first live footage of a bear giving birth. Since then the YouTube video has received nearly 900,000 views. Lily and her cub Hope went on to feature in the BBC documentary *The Bear Family and Me* (2011) but Hope was reportedly killed by hunters soon after the programme aired.

5. Knut

The polar bear Knut, born into captivity at Berlin Zoo in 2006, was abandoned at birth by his mother Tosca, a former circus performer from East Germany. Knut was raised by zookeepers and went on to star in the German government’s campaign against climate change, while Vanity Fair magazine featured him on the cover of its 2007 “green” issue alongside Leonardo DiCaprio. Knut’s premature death, aged four, at Berlin Zoo in 2011 led to a further grief-stricken outbreak of “Knutmania”.

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