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## Syrian Brown Bear

(DP-News-Sana)

Hama, central Syria- in the occasion of World Animal Day on 4th October, Dr. Darem Tabbaa, director of Animal Protection Project (SBANA) in Syria, announced the Syrian Brown Bear as animal of 2010.



World Animal Day

Animal Protection Project in Syria (SBANA) arranged in cooperation with the Ministry of Culture.

Dr. Tabbaa said that each year a specific kind of animal, which is exposed of extinction, is chosen in condition of existence on the Syrian lands. This Syrian Brown Bear is chosen this year due to seeing its traces in 2004 on top of Hermon Mount in Bloudan area, near Damascus, pointing out that several animals of this species could be existed in the region. Tabbaa added that there is a prevailing belief that this animal is extinct in Syria and threatened to be extinct in other countries, particularly in Iran, Turkey, Iraq and Greece and in a number of animal zoos in the world.

Like many large mammals, the Syrian Brown Bear population is declining due to habitat loss and poaching. They are a popular target for hunters in the Middle East and in Asia. In addition, bear gall bladder is a valuable commodity because of its use in traditional Chinese medicine as an assumed cure for rheumatism, poor eyesight and gall stones. The number of the brown bears is about 150 bears in the natural environment according to the Wild Life adopted statistics. Syrian Brown Bears are the smallest of the brown bear subspecies and are native to parts of western Asia including Turkey, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan.

The Syrian Brown Bear is a smaller variety and is found across Syria, Turkey

and the Caucasus mountains of Russia and Georgia. Its fur is coarser than other species of brown bear but also sparser, and the color varies from straw to a gray-brown. Sometimes the bears also have a dark brown patch on their head along with a white collar. The claws of these bears are also straighter and lighter than their northern brown bear cousins. Typically, smaller varieties of this bear are found at higher altitudes, while the larger, dark-color variety are found dwelling in the forests below. The omnivorous Syrian Brown Bear is one of the smaller subspecies of Brown Bears.

The Syrian Brown Bear eats a very wide variety of foods, including fruits, grasses, roots and meat. Adult males have skulls measuring approximately 30-40 cm and 150 cm long. Fur color is usually very light brown and straw colored. The hair on the withers is longer with a gray-brown base and is often a different shade than the rest of the body, seen in some of these bears as a dark stripe running across the back.

Hunting of the Syrian Brown Bears was banned since 1969 to protect them from extinction.

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