



Care For Us

Sun Bear (*Helarctos malayanus*)

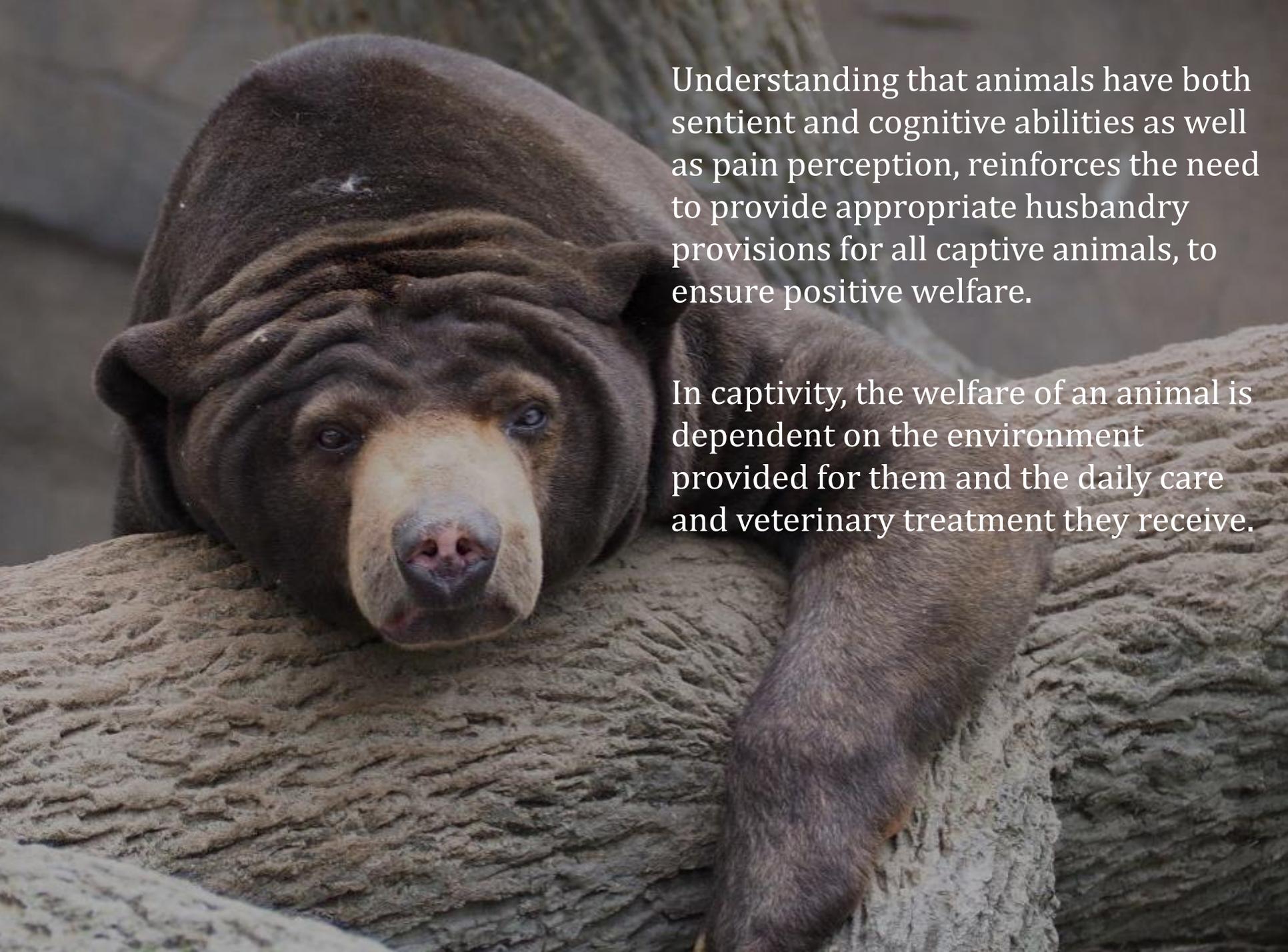
Animal Welfare

Animal welfare refers to an animal's state or feelings. An animal's welfare state can be positive, neutral or negative.

An animal's welfare has the potential to differ on a daily basis. When an animal's needs - nutritional, behavioural, health and environmental - are met, they will have positive welfare.

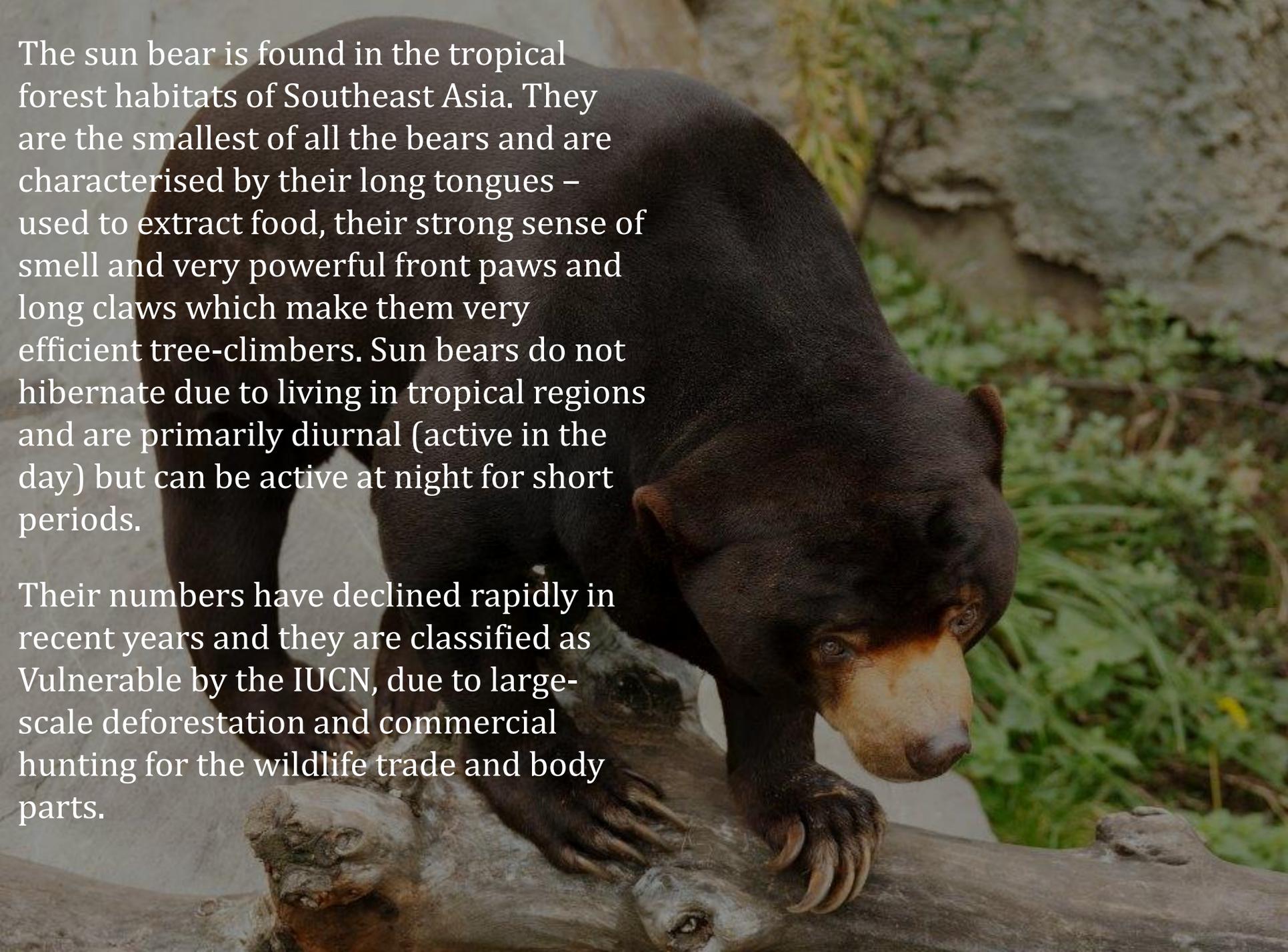
A good life in captivity might be one where animals can consistently experience good welfare - throughout their entire life.



A close-up photograph of a brown bear resting its head on a large, textured log. The bear's face is the central focus, showing its dark brown fur, light-colored muzzle, and dark eyes. The background is a blurred natural setting.

Understanding that animals have both sentient and cognitive abilities as well as pain perception, reinforces the need to provide appropriate husbandry provisions for all captive animals, to ensure positive welfare.

In captivity, the welfare of an animal is dependent on the environment provided for them and the daily care and veterinary treatment they receive.

A black bear is walking on a large, weathered log in a forest. The bear has dark brown fur and a lighter brown patch on its snout. It is looking down and to the right. The background is a blurred forest scene with green foliage and a rocky outcrop.

The sun bear is found in the tropical forest habitats of Southeast Asia. They are the smallest of all the bears and are characterised by their long tongues – used to extract food, their strong sense of smell and very powerful front paws and long claws which make them very efficient tree-climbers. Sun bears do not hibernate due to living in tropical regions and are primarily diurnal (active in the day) but can be active at night for short periods.

Their numbers have declined rapidly in recent years and they are classified as Vulnerable by the IUCN, due to large-scale deforestation and commercial hunting for the wildlife trade and body parts.

Sun Bears Like to Dig and Forage

A sun bear is shown resting on a large, weathered log in a forest. The bear's head is resting on the log, and its body is partially visible. The background consists of more logs and green foliage, creating a natural, forest-like environment. The lighting is soft, highlighting the textures of the wood and the bear's fur.

Sun bears have extremely powerful front legs and long claws. They use these to dig through rotting logs and deep soil to find food such as insects, which are an important protein source for them.

Food foraging takes up a considerable amount of their time and energy – digging, smelling and tasting for food within the forest floor leaf litter, logs and in trees.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Provide multiple feeding opportunities which enable bears to use their powerful legs to dig and forage for food. This can help prevent boredom and encourage positive natural feeding behaviours. Hide food in rotting logs, leaf litters and provide deep substrate for digging.

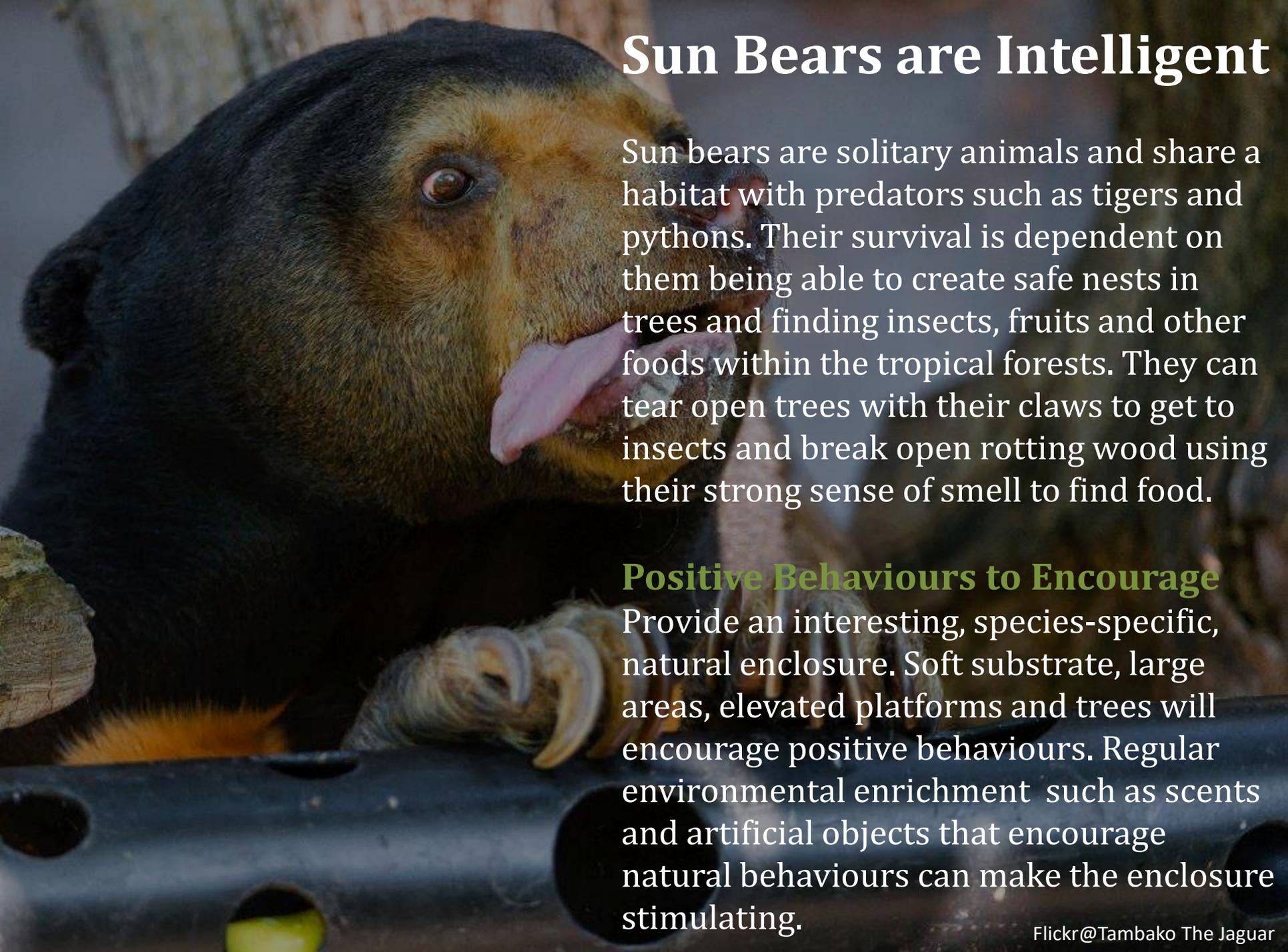
Sun Bears Like to Climb

Large paws, naked soles and long curved claws mean sun bears are very good and speedy climbers. They will climb trees to search for fruit or other food and sleep and spend a lot of their time high up in the trees.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Providing multiple elevated platforms and climbing poles and trees for sun bears to climb, is vital for their health and welfare. Natural trees will be more durable, but man-made platforms can provide different opportunities for feeding and sleeping.





Sun Bears are Intelligent

Sun bears are solitary animals and share a habitat with predators such as tigers and pythons. Their survival is dependent on them being able to create safe nests in trees and finding insects, fruits and other foods within the tropical forests. They can tear open trees with their claws to get to insects and break open rotting wood using their strong sense of smell to find food.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Provide an interesting, species-specific, natural enclosure. Soft substrate, large areas, elevated platforms and trees will encourage positive behaviours. Regular environmental enrichment such as scents and artificial objects that encourage natural behaviours can make the enclosure stimulating.

Sun Bears Like to Sleep



Sun bears will climb trees to rest in branches or build nests that are safe from predators below. They will also bed either in or underneath fallen hollow logs, and use leaf litter for soft bedding.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

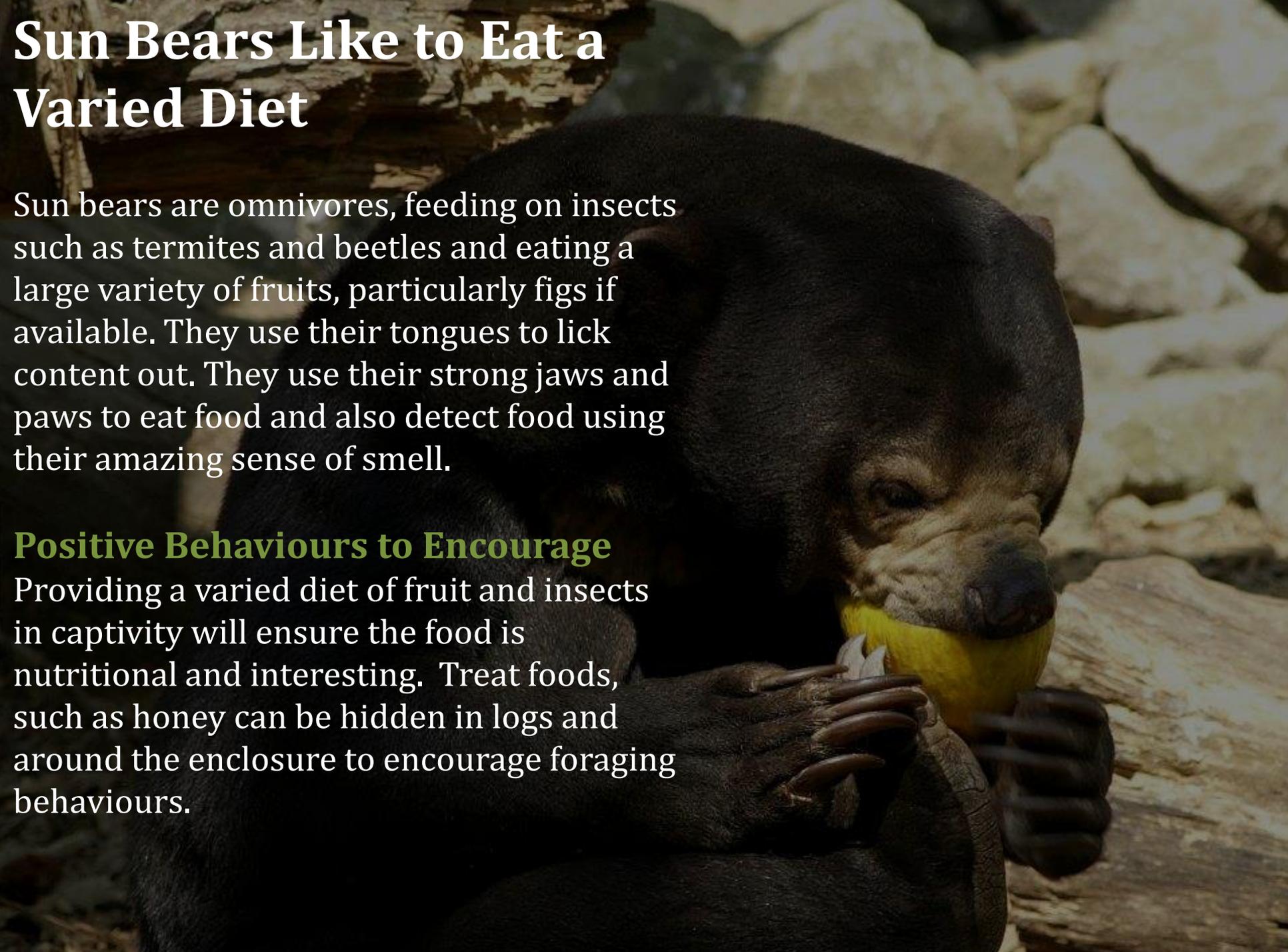
Providing multiple trees and platforms for all sun bears in captivity will provide a safe and natural environment. Providing dens and areas away from public viewing for the bears to rest in will allow bears to sleep without stress.

Sun Bears Like to Eat a Varied Diet

Sun bears are omnivores, feeding on insects such as termites and beetles and eating a large variety of fruits, particularly figs if available. They use their tongues to lick content out. They use their strong jaws and paws to eat food and also detect food using their amazing sense of smell.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Providing a varied diet of fruit and insects in captivity will ensure the food is nutritional and interesting. Treat foods, such as honey can be hidden in logs and around the enclosure to encourage foraging behaviours.



Sun Bears will Groom and Socialise

Sun bears will spend a lot of time grooming themselves. They generally focus on their paws because they are important tools for climbing, digging, and eating. Bears are usually solitary but come together during the mating season or when a mother is with her cub.

Positive Behaviours to Encourage

Sun bears can be kept together in captivity as food is not in limited supply. But enough food and different feeding opportunities and stations must be provided to avoid any competition between individuals.

Sun Bears Enjoy...

Eating different and interesting foods. They enjoy sleeping on soft substrate and using their bodies to climb, groom and find food.

In captivity we should always try and replicate their natural and normal behaviours, so they are happy and healthy throughout their lives.

