

Name _____



The Role of Bears in the Ecosystem

Bears play an important role in keeping their ecosystems healthy and balanced. As omnivores, bears eat both plants and animals, which helps control different parts of the food chain. Their eating habits affect the plants and animals in their habitats in many ways.

One way bears help the ecosystem is by spreading seeds. When bears eat berries and other fruits, they digest the food but leave seeds in their droppings. These seeds grow into new plants, helping forests and meadows stay healthy and full of plants.

Bears also control animal populations. They often eat insects, fish, and small mammals, which prevents these species from becoming too large and harming the balance of the environment. For example, brown bears catch salmon, which helps keep fish populations balanced in rivers.

Another way bears support the ecosystem is by breaking down dead animals. When a bear finds a dead animal, it eats the remains, which helps clean up the forest. This process also returns important nutrients to the soil, helping plants grow.

Bears are also known as keystone species, which means their presence affects many other species in the ecosystem. When bears thrive, it often means the entire habitat is healthy. Protecting bears helps protect many other animals and plants in the same environment.