

## Buster Bear's Big Cousins

Buster Bear had been right about the coming of Farmer Brown. It was only a few minutes after Buster's disappearance that Farmer Brown's footsteps were heard coming down the Lone Little Path, and of course that ended school for that morning. But the next morning all were on hand again at sun-up, for every one wanted to hear about Buster Bear's big cousins.

“Way out in the mountains of the Far West, where Whistler the Marmot and Little Chief the Pika live, is a big cousin of Buster Bear,” began Old Mother Nature. “He is Silvertip the Grizzly Bear, and in the past no animal in all this great country was so feared by man, as he. But times have changed, and Silvertip has been so hunted with terrible guns that he has learned to fear man quite as much as Buster does.

“He is larger than Buster and possessed of tremendous strength. Instead of a black coat, he has a coat which varies from yellowish-brown to almost black. The tips of the hairs usually are lighter, giving him a frosted appearance, and this is what has given him his name. His claws are longer and more curved than those of Buster; in fact those claws are so big that they look very terrible. Because they are so long, Silvertip cannot climb trees. But if they prevent him climbing trees they are the finest kind of tools for digging out Marmots and ground Squirrels. Even when Whistler the Marmot makes his home down in among the rocks, he is not safe. Silvertip's strength is so great that he can pull over and roll aside great rocks.

“He is a great traveler and covers a wide range of country in his search for food. Sometimes he visits the Cattle ranges and kills Cattle. So great is his strength that he can kill a Cow with ease. Clumsy looking as he is, he is a very fast runner, and only a fast Horse can outrun him. Like Buster, he lives on anything he can find that is eatable. He has been so hunted by man that he has become very cunning, and in all the great mountains where he lives there is no one with quicker wits. At certain seasons of the year great numbers of a fish called Salmon come up the rivers in that country, and then Silvertip lives high. He watches beside a pool until a Salmon swims within reach; then, with a swift movement of one paw, he scoops the fish on to the bank. Or he finds a place where the water is so shallow that the fish have difficulty in getting across, and there he seizes them as they struggle up the river. In winter he sleeps just as Buster does, usually in a well-hidden cave.

“Mrs. Silvertip is a splendid mother. Usually the cubs, of which as a rule there are two, remain with her until they are a year old. Both Buster Bear and Silvertip have a queer habit of standing up against a tree and biting it as high up as they can reach. The next Bear who comes along that way sees the mark and makes his own on the same tree. Silvertip knows every inch of that part of the country in which he lives and always picks out the best way of getting from one place to another. He is one of the finest animals in this country, and it is a matter for sadness that his splendid race will soon come to an end unless man makes laws to protect him from the hunters. In very many places where he used to be found he lives no longer.

“Silvertip is not so good-natured as Buster, but all he asks is to be left alone. Of course when he turns Cattle killer he is getting into the worst possible kind of mischief and man cannot be blamed for hunting him. But it is only now and then that one of Silvertip's family turns Cattle killer. The others do no harm.

“I told you yesterday that Buster Bear has one cousin beside whom he would look small. This is Bigfoot the Alaska or Great Brown Bear, who lives in the extreme northwest part of the continent. Even Silvertip would look small beside him. He is a giant, the largest flesh-eating animal in all the great world. His coat is dark brown. When he stands up on his hind legs, he is almost half again as tall as a

tall man. He stands very high at the shoulders and his head is very large. Like the other members of the Bear family, he eats all sorts of things. He hunts for Mice and other small animals, digs up roots, stuffs himself with berries, and at times grazes on a kind of wild grass, just as Cattle might do. He is a great fish eater, for fish are very plentiful in the streams in the country where he lives. Big as he is, he has learned to fear man just as Silvertip has. Occasionally when surprised he has been known to attack man and kill him, but as a rule he will run at the first hint of man's approach.

“The last of the Bear cousins is Snow King the Polar Bear. Snow King is king of the Frozen North. He lives in the region of snow and ice, and his coat is all white. He also is a big Bear, and of somewhat different shape from his cousins. He is longer, and has a much longer neck and a long head. His ears are rather small and close to his head. Snow King lives the year round where it would seem that no animal could live, and he manages to live well. Though his home is in the coldest part of the Great World, he does not mind the cold at all.

“More than any other member of the Bear family, Snow King is a flesh eater. This is because only in certain places, and then only for a few weeks in midsummer, is there any plant life. He is a great fisherman, and fish furnish him a great deal of his food. In that far northern country are great numbers of animals who live in the ocean, but come ashore to rest and bask in the sun, and to have their babies there. They are Seals, Sea Lions and Walruses. I will tell you about them later. On these Snow King depends for much of his food. He is himself a wonderful swimmer, and often swims far out in the icy water.

“Up there there are great fields of floating ice, and Snow King swims from one to another in search of Seals, for they often climb out on these ice fields, just as they do on shore. Sometimes Mrs. Bear takes her cubs for long swims. When they become tired, one will climb on her back, and the other will seize her tail, so she will carry one and tow the other.

“Snow King's babies are born in a house of snow. Early in the winter Mrs. Bear finds a sheltered place where the snow will drift over her. There she goes to sleep, and the snow drifts and drifts over her until she is buried deep. You might think she would be cold, but she isn't, for the snow keeps her warm. Her breath melts a little hole up through the snow, so that she always has air. There the babies are born, and there they remain, just as Buster Bear's remain in their home, until they are big enough to follow their mother about. Then she breaks her way out in the spring, and leads her cubs forth to teach them how to take care of themselves. Snow King, himself, does not sleep through the winter, but roams about, just as in the summer.

“Snow King is fearless and has not yet learned to dread man, as have his cousins. He will not hesitate to attack man and is terrible to meet at close quarters. Because he lives in that far, cold country, he is not hunted as much as other bears are. Besides the Seals and fish, he sometimes catches an Arctic Hare. In the summer great numbers of Ducks and other sea birds nest in that far northern country, and their eggs and young add to Snow King's bill of fare. His white coat is so in keeping with his surroundings that it is of the greatest aid to him in his hunting. It is a very beautiful coat and makes him the most beautiful of all the Bear family.

“Now this is all about the Bears, and also it is all about the order of flesh eaters, or Carnivora. I think that next we will see what we can find out about a certain little friend of yours, who, though he eats flesh, is not a member of the flesh-eating order at all, but belongs to an order of which he is the only member in this country. I will leave you to guess who it is.”

Source:

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