

BEARS FIRST

Idaho Black Bear Rehab., Inc.

April, 2000



Look over there - we better check that out.



She's too small to be mom & too big to be one of us?

WHERE DID THE TIME GO?

It's hard to believe we did the last newsletter in Nov. 1997. Things were a bit scary as to how we would fund the rehab program during that time. It was a year of concern, changes, and new opportunities. We didn't know what an exciting period the following two years would be - full of new experiences, a few challenges, and a wonderful way to welcome the new millennium.

When Sally started as a wildlife rehabilitator 21 years ago, she worked with all wildlife. Before long she acquired the nickname of "the squirrel lady". This past year her status seems to have officially changed to that of "the bear lady". While she considers it a privilege to be called either one, she is most proud of the accomplishments and changes the bear program brought to the plight of orphaned cubs. We took what seemed like tiny baby steps at the time and yet accomplished so much more.

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WSPA - A NEW FRIEND

We very pleased to tell you about our association with **WSPA (World Society for the Protection of Animals)** in London, England and the Boston office here in the U.S. The Libearty campaign of WSPA is involved with bear projects all around the world. Several years ago, Sally and Victor Watkins (Director of Wildlife for WSPA) began a correspondence on a sanctuary WSPA was building for the dancing bears of Turkey confiscated by authorities. Sally was very impressed by their work and efforts to help bears around the world. During 1998, Chris Morgan, now Director of Insight Wildlife Management, Inc. in Bellingham, WA, and at the time a consultant to WSPA, visited the bear program for WSPA and spent several days with us. WSPA provided the funding to feed and care for the cubs during 1998. They also funded two projects - finishing the solid roof on the enclosure and bringing water to all the enclosures.

In 1999 they provided funding for two education trunks designed to teach kids about bears. These trunks are available from the Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game for loan to schools throughout Idaho. The trunk contains videos (including one on the bear program), books, bear claws & skulls, teachers aids and all kinds of fun and interesting information about bears. WSPA also provided the funding to help feed the cubs during 1999 and to radio collar and track the cubs denned in Dec., 1999.

WSPA not only provided financial aid, but everyone is very supportive and encouraging - always ready to help if help is needed. They did even more to help the IBBR as you will read about farther on in this newsletter. Like many of you, we also send in donations to various organizations, always wondering if the donation does any good & what exactly do they do with it. Well, if you donated to WSPA, we can tell you for certain what your money has meant to the bear program, to orphaned cubs, and to all of us working so hard to save them. Just consider all we've accomplished since the last newsletter thanks to WSPA and donations from so many people like you. If you aren't familiar with WSPA, check them out at www.wspa-americas.org. You'll even find some information about the bear program & soon the Boston office of WSPA will have their own web site.



John Beecham & Victor Watkins - pit stop on the way to release 9 cubs - May, 1999 (see related story in this issued)

DOCUMENTARY - BORN TO BE WILD

Thanks to Jonathan Owen at WSPA in London for bringing the rehab program to the attention of producer Michael Massey at the BBC (British Broadcasting Corp.). Michael & his staff produce the show Born to be Wild for the BBC. All during 1999, Michael & the BBC were here filming for a documentary on the Idaho Black Bear Rehab Program. Celebrity host Amanda Burton also visited from England several times during 1999 and in the spring of 2000. The hour long documentary will air this fall on

the BBC & sometime later on the Discovery Channel. It was a tremendous pleasure to work with Michael and everyone from the BBC. We are so grateful for the opportunities this film will bring to help even more orphaned cubs.

A special thanks to Amanda, who made formula, bottle fed the cubs, picked up bear scat, hauled hay, and worked right alongside us each day. More than once, Sally commented on what a special lady she is and what a pleasure it was to work with her. Amanda is currently filming her BBC series, "Silent Witness". We'll keep you posted on when the documentary will air in the U.S.

TO MOVE OR NOT TO MOVE

During the spring of this year the property next to us sold and will soon be a new subdivision. That means we will be surrounded on the north & south by subdivisions. We began looking for new property to relocate the bear program. Unfortunately, we didn't find any land that we liked or was in the price range.



Canadian Geese take a one last gander at the pasture next to us - soon to be a subdivision



If we have to move, I can help - I'll just start with this log first.

Sally also said she was just too old & tired to relocate everything. After much consideration, we decided to stay here and try to make it work. The City of Garden City is so supportive of the bear program and that was a prime reason for our decision to stay. We've worked with many city and state agencies, but none as nice and helpful as the wonderful as the people at Garden City Hall. We decided there wasn't a better place in which to locate the bear program than we have now. The long-time neighbors have always been supportive. The residents in the subdivision built to the north of us proved likewise. So, we'll make it work with our newest neighbors to the south as they build their houses and move in.



The last cub steps out to meet his new friends

BEARS, BEARS, EVERYWHERE BEARS

In 1998 we received eleven orphaned cubs. Two arrived in June from our neighboring state of Oregon. In Oct., eight more arrived - all on the same day! Our good friends, Tim & Ame from Wild Animal Rehab of Idaho brought them down from northern Idaho, stopping in McCall to pick up another one waiting for transport to us. They arrived with a huge horse trailer filled with four large metal carriers. What a day that was. No doubt the two cubs already in residence were a bit bewildered to



**John Beecham, Tara Wertz & 2 volunteers
prepare to unload the cubs**

see all these bears. When the doors to the carriers opened, it seemed like a never-ending parade of bears. In Dec., the last of the eleven cubs arrived.

In Dec., we took the two Oregon cubs back to Oregon to finish hibernation in their own state. Tara Wertz from Oregon Fish and Wildlife, who originally brought the cubs to us, met us near the den site. Tara found a huge hollow log that made a great den for the bears. When we arrived, the two cubs were very unhappy with us over the long trip and their confinement. They were quite

anxious to be on their way and didn't hesitate to let us know that in no uncertain terms.

The nine cubs who arrived late in Oct. & Dec. needed more time to gain sufficient weight to survive hibernation and the early months of spring when food is scarce. We continued feeding them, making plans to den them in February. Due to circumstances beyond our control & scheduling problems with the release team, it was too close to the start of hunting season before we could go with the remaining bears. That was unacceptable and we held the cubs until late May. Although we were concerned about just releasing them rather than placing them in dens, it turned out to be an exceptional release.



**Tara & Lakota - both snug in the hollow log all set
for a long winter sleep...(Tara didn't get to stay)**

When we place the cubs in dens for hibernation, they are asleep when we leave. This time, we had the rare opportunity to see the bears as bears in the natural habitat, doing what bears do. We hauled all nine to the release site, opened the carrier doors, letting two bears at a time out. They darted off into an onion field right next to us. Some of them climbed trees, some browsed in the onion field, some played. It was the chance of a lifetime to see the bears just checking out their new home and doing everything you expect bears to do. We watched them for about 20 minutes before one of the group headed up the slope and into the trees. The rest followed suit almost immediately, two or three at a time. Last we saw of them, all nine bears were working their way slowly across the top of the slope, still following the leader. What a picture that was! The last page of this newsletter has some fantastic pictures of the release.

15 MINUTES OF FAME

We've all heard that during our lifetime, each of us will see our own 15 minutes of fame. The bear program experienced that and much more during 1998 and 1999 with a lot of national and international publicity. It was very exciting to bring the plight of orphaned bears to the world. To name just a few - Saint Bryan with King TV in Seattle, Sam Verhovek from the New York Times, Roger O'Neal from NBC News with Tom Brokaw, Sue Nass with Incredible Idaho, Lora Finnegan with Sunset Magazine, Lynn Sherr from Good Morning America, Jim Hutchison from the London Daily Mail, Tim Jackson with the Idaho State Journal, Tim McKay from Eco News in California, Viviane Moos & Tom McNamee representing Sipa Press & the Museum of Natural History Magazine, and various radio stations and



publications in the U.S. & Canada. We've had requests from Italian and German TV, Discovery News, and many others. We'll see what 2000 brings for bears & getting the word out about saving these orphaned cubs.

The photo on the left was taken by Jim Hutchison of the London Daily Mail. You seldom see pictures of Sally with the cubs because the cubs are too active and things happen too quickly for us to snap a picture. In this case, Sally took a break from cleaning up bear scat to visit for a moment with Jim who was standing in the outside entryway. Tecumseh, a big male decided he needed to join the discussion. What you don't see is Sally's hand

holding him by the scruff to keep him from coming over the top to personally inspect the camera. There is something magnetic between bears & cameras - put a camera where they can see it and they can't resist going after it. Seconds after Jim snapped the picture Tecumseh let his foster mom know he didn't appreciate her holding him back..... and he put all of his 80 pounds behind his complaint. (Don't worry, no one was hurt - Sally is always in control when it comes to rambunctious cubs.....or so she tells the bears).

WELCOME TO 2000

Having made the decision not to move, WSPA offered to build a new and larger enclosure which would allow us to take even more orphaned cubs. We've never said no to an orphaned cub, but as more states ask for our help to rehab the cubs, the time would come when that would happen. Today, as you read this, our new enclosure in the pasture behind us is done except for the finishing touches. That's very good news since we just received word that yet another state would like the bear program to rehab cubs for them. We are grateful to Greg Allen of Hummel Architects for donating his skills and time to draw up the plans and the revisions. Many thanks to Craig Eckles at Garden City for his guidance and counseling in getting the plans done. It would still be in the planning stages if John Beecham hadn't stepped in following his retirement from Fish & Game to take on the project. He oversaw the work & made sure things got done. There are a lot of people to thank & we'll cover that in our next issue when we tell you more about the enclosure and our dedication ceremonies.

The enclosure was funded by WSPA supporter Pam Walker, who sadly died last year. It her generous legacy to WSPA's Liberty campaign that built our new enclosure. We are forever grateful to WSPA, Libearty, Pam Walker and her family for helping us so we will never have to turn away an orphaned cub. In July we will have a dedication ceremony and open house to celebrate the completion of the new enclosure. We'll include pictures in the next issue of Bears First. I hope those of you in the area will be able to join us for the open house.

OTHER NEWS

This year we start filming a training video on the rehab process. When completed, the video will be available for wildlife



Did you say a video camera?

rehabilitators, Fish & Game departments, wildlife biologists, schools, zoos, wildlife organizations, and bear projects around the world. We have someone very special in mind to narrate this video and hope he will agree to do it. (More on that later.) We'd like to add a word of thanks to Clinton Wilson & family for donating a wonderful video camera to the bear program. After the bears demolished ours, we've been borrowing one to do any filming. This camera will assist us greatly in getting the footage needed for the training video.

Thanks to funding from WSPA and the services of A-1 Plumbing, we now have water year around to all the enclosures. No one can fully appreciate how happy we are that we no longer have to haul 30 gallons of water in buckets to the bears during the dead of winter! Thank you so much, WSPA and A-1 Plumbing.

In May, we will **FINALLY** have the non-profit paperwork completed & ready to submit. Hopefully, it will be approved within a few months from our submission.

Sally sends her personal thanks to Kevin Mitsunaga at Albertsons. His dedication in bringing fruit though the summer months was a blessing for the cubs. Thanks, Kevin - you are wonderful and very much appreciated.

BEARS AND KIDS

Each year we host up to 100 kids from local schools to talk about bears and the rehab program. For the past several years, teacher Bonnie Dufty from Riverside Elementary taught her classes all about bears. Then the classes visited the bear program and learned what happens with the orphaned cubs. With the completion of the new enclosure, we have three one way mirrors installed. Now during education programs, the kids can see the cubs without the cubs seeing them.

A really special thanks to teacher Maggie Samudio and all the kids (and parents) from Cumberland Elementary in West Lafayette, Indiana. The kids adopted two of the orphaned cubs, following their progress until we put them in dens for hibernation. The entire school participated in the project during two school years. They raised money which helped feed the cubs and helped us to finally purchase a walk on bear scale to weigh the cubs. The scale was badly needed for years, but beyond our ability to purchase it. Now we can weigh cubs from 3 pounds to 300 pounds. No more guessing! Maggie & the kids worked so hard to help the cubs. In the process, they learned all about bears throughout the world. They are a wonderful example to others on what can be done to help.



PLEASE, WILL YOU HELP? SHARE THIS UPDATE WITH YOUR FRIENDS, CO-WORKERS, RELATIVES AND ANYONE YOU FEEL CAN HELP. YOU MIGHT BE THE ONE PERSON TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE! IT COULD EASILY BE YOUR DONATION OR ACTION THAT SAVES ANOTHER CUB!

BEAR NECESSITIES - WISH LIST

URGENT: \$\$\$\$ for formula - Walk-in cooler (desperately needed)
Canned & fresh fruit - Volunteer Coordinator

GENERAL SUPPLIES:

Clean grass hay for bedding - Bath towels - Hand towels - Large, medium, & small Vari-Kennels - Lumber Postage stamps - Donated printing - large tree logs or stumps for climbing

SPECIALITY ITEMS - AVAILABLE BY SPECIAL ORDER FROM UPCO

(800 254-8726 - no substitutions please)

Milk Matrix #99882 (20lbs) - Esbilac #9498 (5 Lbs powdered)
Vionate #615 (2 Lbs)



Ruggles - 1989 - He started it all!

FORMULA ITEMS:

Jars of Gerbers fruit baby cereal - Flavored Yogurt - Honey -
Cans of condensed milk (not evaporated) - Natural applesauce - Boxes of oatmeal - Boxes of Gerbers cereal

FOOD ITEMS:

Sacks of dry dog food - Bread - Acorns & Hazelnuts - Fish (salmon or trout) - Raw carrots - Leaf lettuce
Cans or jars of jars of fruit

Fresh fruit of all kinds: apples, peaches, pears, grapes, plums, cherries, apricots, watermelons, cantaloupes, blackberries, blueberries, boysenberries, strawberries

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