

# Help Wanted

## Sally Maughan Black Bear Rehabilitator

**H**ow does a motherless bear learn how to be a bear? Since 1988, Sally Maughan of Boise, ID, a licensed **wildlife rehabilitator** who collaborates with Idaho Department of Fish and Game, has worked hands-on to help orphaned American black bear cubs return to the wilderness. Black bears often become orphans at a very young age when their mothers are illegally hunted or hit by a car.

**Animaland:** What was it like to have that first bear cub in your care?

**Maughan:** The first week I thought I had a living teddy bear, but by the time I realized I had Hurricane Georges on my hands, it was too late—I was totally hooked.

The first five years as a bear rehabilitator, I spent three or four hours each day for nine months out of the year just watching the cubs. I observed them at all times of day and night so that I knew what a bear cub would be doing at 3 A.M. in August, which is different from what he would do at 3 A.M. in December.

**Animaland:** Working with bears can be dangerous, can't it?

**Maughan:** Yes, they can be rough. I was caring for a female cub who was only 8



**Hey, sleepyhead! A 9-week-old black bear wakes up from a nap. As he grows, he'll use his long, curved front claws to dig up tender plant roots for food or climb trees to escape danger.**

or 9 pounds. She wouldn't nurse on a bottle until she had sucked on skin first. That wasn't a problem, since she had no teeth. But she had very long claws. A bear kneads like a cat while suckling, so I got bad cuts and marks all over my arm.

**Animaland:** What was the most fun bear release you've ever done?

**Maughan:** In May 1999 we released eight cubs into an onion bed. We opened the cages, and out they tore. The bears ate onions, climbed in trees and sat around for 20 minutes or so and then climbed up a hill. We really got to see them as you'd like to see bears in the wild.

**Animaland:** What can kids do to help bears?

**Maughan:** Learn about them. Understand what their needs are. We need to learn how to live with them as we continue to move into their habitat. 🐾

Before heading out for release, each bear cub is tranquilized so that Maughan, left, can measure size, estimate weight and attach ID ear tags.

