



# JOURNAL

THE

APRIL 2003



# On a mission to give bears a life

campaigner Lesley Hogan talks to **Karen Milestone**

**When Lesley Hogan first began raising money to help protect bears from cruelty, she never thought one day she would be able to see for herself the bears she so wishes in a protected environment.**



One of the bears roams the rehabilitation centre after being rescued.

Lesley, who lives near Tamworth, first became involved with the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) campaign Liberty four years ago after discovering the tragic plight of bears around the world. She has since raised almost £7,000 for the campaign which aims to stop cruelty to and the exploitation of bears, including the dancing bears of Greece and Turkey, bear baiting in Pakistan, bear parks in Japan and bear bile farming in China.

This latter practice involves bears, cramped into small cages, having a tube inserted into their stomachs to allow bile to drip out constantly – this is collected and used in some Chinese medicines. Last year Lesley was invited to the Idaho Black Bear



Lesley Hogan with just a few of the countless teddies she sells in aid of Liberty.

Rehabilitation Centre funded by the WSPA Liberty campaign. “It’s hard to put into words what a wonderful experience that was,” said Lesley.

“We met Sally Maughan who, with the aid of her 80-year-old mother, runs the project at her home in Boise, Idaho. She hand-rears the cubs until they are old enough to be released back into the wild. Two cubs, Washakie and Arapaho, were due for release and consequently they were quite big and Sally was keeping human contact to a minimum.

“Of course I was slightly disappointed that they weren’t small enough to cuddle like a teddy bear. But that soon wore off when I saw what magnificent creatures the bears were.”

She added: “It was quite emotional to see Sally with them and listen to the heartbreaking stories and the difficulties

**T**eddy bears donated by Cherie Blair, Dame Judi Dench, Alex Ferguson and Frank Skinner are among those being auctioned in an on-line charity fundraiser for Liberty next month. The bears, all signed by the stars, are available to bid for at [www.ebay.co.uk/charity](http://www.ebay.co.uk/charity) from May 1-10. Actor Martin Shaw, who supports WSPA’s



Washakie and Arapaho are now back in the wild.

she has had to overcome.”

These difficulties are not only financial – there is also the American attitude towards bears and the continual hunting which orphans so many cubs who are then left to die.”

Another person captivated by the plight of these gorgeous creatures is *Silent Witness*

Liberty campaign, said: “We all grew up clutching a teddy bear before we went to sleep. So how can we stand back and allow the real thing to be treated so barbarically?” Victor Watkins, director of Liberty added: “WSPA launched Liberty ten years ago to put a stop to cruel practices such as bear baiting. We continue to release bears back into the wild or to sanctuaries.”

star Amanda Burton who has also visited the sanctuary in Idaho to make a Born to be Wild documentary, *Black Bear Rescue*. The actress has nothing but praise for Sally and the sanctuary which is effectively just her house and back garden. As well as her trip to Idaho, Lesley has also been honoured for her support at a new bear sanctuary in Pakistan, where her name appears on a plaque alongside those of other fundraisers.

She raises money for the campaign by selling on teddy bears donated

her and also makes jumpers, teddy bear greeting cards, framed bear pictures, bookmarks and fridge magnets which she sells from stalls at events across the area. For details of WSPA and Liberty, contact Lesley on 01827 874340. The WSPA website is on [www.wspa.org.uk](http://www.wspa.org.uk)



Michaela Strachan’s Burberry bear.