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Three rescued bear cubs released into the wild

The future is looking brighter for three black bears cubs that were orphaned from their mothers in Utah last year. After being successfully rehabilitated, they were released recently by Utah Division of Wildlife Resources biologists into the eastern portion of the Manti-La Sal National Forest, near the Utah-Colorado border in Grand County.

The three cubs were orphaned in different ways in 2002. One cub was accidentally captured in a snare trap, the mother of another cub was taken illegally during a hunting season and the mother of the third cub was killed by a vehicle. The cubs weighed 9-, 15- and 30-pounds respectively when they were found last year.



The smallest of three rescued cubs just before transferal to a rehabilitation center last year.

Photo by Scott Root

DWR biologists took each cub to Sally Maughan of the Idaho Black Bear Rehabilitation Center in Boise, where she successfully rehabilitated them with minimal human contact. "They weigh approximately 120 pounds each and should have the skills necessary to survive in the wild," said Dave Hintze, one of the DWR biologists who helped release the cubs.

The cubs were released the same day they were picked up from Idaho. Before being released, all three were fitted with ear tags and radio collars. This will allow biologists to monitor their habits.

Maughan says rehabilitated bear cubs do very well in the wild and have minimal problems with people. "Out of the 79 bears I have rehabilitated, and which were eventually released, only two exhibited any nuisance behavior at a later date," she said.

