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Section: Local

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Injured bear cub goes to rehab

*Chereen Langrill**Staff*

Motorist rescues 5-month-old bruin on Idaho 55

Chereen Langrill

Staff

A baby black **bear** rescued from the highway has a temporary home at a rehabilitation center in Garden City, thanks to a passing motorist and other animal lovers.

The 36-pound female **cub**, which is about 5 months old, was discovered by Duane Lavelly after midnight Sunday when he was driving north on Idaho 55 near Horseshoe Bend.

The **cub** apparently was hit by a car on the highway. She had a broken leg, a dislocated hip, a dislocated and fractured elbow and a large laceration on one leg.

Although Lavelly's rescue of the young **bear** was appreciated, **bear** experts discourage such actions.

"It's hard to just drive off and leave something, but someone who doesn't know anything about **bears** or doesn't live in the woods or mountains is taking some risks," said Sally Maughan, who runs Garden City-based Idaho Black **Bear Rehab** Inc. "You shouldn't just pick something up and take it with you. It might not be alone."

Mother **bears** are fiercely protective, and even **cubs** have jaws strong enough to crush fingers, and claws that can puncture skin, Maughan said. The animals can be especially combative when they're scared or in pain, she said.

Rather than trying to pick up the animal, passersby should call Fish and Game officials and give them detailed directions to the location where they saw the **bear**, including recognizable landmarks, she said. Then call the agency again to follow up and make sure they found the animal, she said.

At first, Lavelly wasn't sure what he was looking at as he drove along the highway early Sunday. Lavelly is a Greyhound bus driver and was returning home to Garden Valley from work.

He said he noticed a "huge round furry something or other" on the right side of the road and a smaller furry object on the other side, next to a concrete barrier.

He turned around and came back to see an adult sow move up the hill over the concrete barrier. Her **bear cub** across the street was trying to move up the hill and "dragging her right rear leg."

Lavelly worried that another car would hit the **cub**, so he parked his car diagonally across the southbound lanes to rescue the **bear**.

"So I grabbed a blanket and put it on her, to calm her down, and picked her up and put her in the back of my (car)," he said.

Lavelly said he decided it was safe to take the baby because the mother **bear** was walking away, up the hill, and wasn't trying to save the **cub** herself.

"I think the mom let me take her because she couldn't figure out how to get the baby over the barrier," he said.

Lavelly said he had attended a class about black **bears** taught by Maughan, so he knew there was an organization in Garden City that could help,

He drove to the Stinker Station on State Street and called 911. When officers arrived, they told him to take the **cub** to the Animal Emergency and Referral Center of Idaho, which is open 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Director/manager Ann Selander said the baby **bear** was the center of attention until her stay ended late Tuesday afternoon when Maughan picked her up for rehabilitation.

"I think everybody's family members have been down to look at her," Selander said.

On Tuesday, emergency center staff members peeked through a window in a door to watch the **cub** resting inside a kennel.

She cuddled with a stuffed toy leopard, curling her front leg around the toy. She munched on grapes, carrots, blackberries and canned dog food.

The **bear** was in severe shock when she arrived at the clinic, Selander said.

"At first she was a little cuddle bunny," Lavelly said.

But a day later she showed signs of recovery. She managed to open the latch to her kennel, then the door to the room and was found wandering through the clinic. On Tuesday she growled and cried in frustration when employees wouldn't let her out of the kennel and swiped her paw at the door.

She is the first **bear cub** ever treated at the emergency center, Selander said. Former patients include cougars, bobcats, deer, raccoons and fox.

Veterinary surgeon Jeff Brouman said the unique patient required some creative research as he prepared to treat her. He took an X-ray of the **bear's** uninjured leg and used it as a reference point while he treated the **cub's** injuries.

"There were differences in the anatomy that made it a challenge," Brouman said.

The **cub** underwent surgery with full anesthesia on Monday night, and pins and screws were placed in her bones to help the fractures heal.

Her recovery will continue at Maughan's rehabilitation facility. In late November, Maughan will begin to introduce the **bear** to hibernation by tapering off her food supply. In mid-December she'll work with a Fish and Game officer to transport the **cub**, along with two other **bear cubs** in her care, to a special spot in Central Idaho. They'll place the **bears** in dens, cover the entrances with pine boughs and snow, then walk away.

"You don't get attached, because it's very painful when you have to release them," Maughan said.

How does **bear** rehabilitation work?

Bear rehabilitation

Sally Maughan founded Idaho Black **Bear Rehab** Inc. in 1989 and has helped about 92 **bears**, including a female **cub** rescued Sunday morning after it was hit by a car on Idaho 55. She offers some answers on how the reintroduction process works:

Why can't **injured** or lost **bear cubs** be reunited with their mothers?

The bond between mother and **cub** is gone after the two are separated, even for a few days.

How are they reintroduced to the wild?

Most **bears** treated by Maughan are returned **to** the wild when hibernation season begins in December. It allows a gradual readjustment **to** the wild.

A day before release, a Fish and Game officer **goes to** the location **to** make sure the designated dens are empty. The day of release, the **bears** are tranquilized, fitted with a radio collar and then taken **to** the release area in Central Idaho. When they arrive, the **bears** are tranquilized again and placed in the dens.

The collars stay on the **bears** for about six months; then the surgical tie falls off. Maughan retrieves the collars for future use.

Does Idaho Black **Bear Rehab** care for adult **bears**?

No, because the organization doesn't have a facility there strong enough **to** handle an adult **bear**.

How you can help

A fund has been established **to** help with costs of caring for a black **bear cub injured** when she was hit by a car early Sunday on Idaho 55. Contributions can be made **to** the Black **Bear** Rehabilitation Account at any branch of D.L. Evans Bank. During daytime hours, contact the Idaho Department of Fish and Game at 334-3700. After hours, call your local police dispatch.

The **bear** is continuing her recovery at Idaho Black **Bear Rehab** Inc., a local nonprofit organization.

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Reporter Patrick Orr contributed **to** this story.; **To** offer story ideas or comments, contact reporter Chereen Langrill at cclangrillidahostatesman.com or 373-6617.

Cutline:An **injured** infant **bear** was found this past weekend along Idaho 55 near Horseshoe Bend by Duane Lavelly of Garden Valley. The **bear** recovered at the Animal Emergency and Referral Center of Idaho in Garden City until Tuesday evening, when it was picked up by Idaho Black **Bear Rehab** Inc. A stuffed leopard in the kennel helped comfort the baby **bear**.

Duane Lavelly

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