

Idaho Statesman

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Page: 01

Bear rehab center seeks financial help

Heath Druzin

Staff

Population surge means a lot more food is needed

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A bumper crop of bears has the Idaho Black Bear Rehab center looking for help.

The Garden City center, which takes in injured and orphaned cubs and yearlings from around the West, is partnering with artist Ward Hooper to raise funds for needed improvements and to pay for the care of a record number of bears.

It costs from \$32,000 to \$35,000 per year to run the center.

Consider what the bears eat each day:

Eight 20 pound sacks of dog food.

A case and a half of apples.

10 loaves of bread.

50-pound sack of carrots.

The grocery bill alone can be \$800 to \$900 per bear per year, founder Sally Maughan said. She usually takes in about 10 bears per year from around the West, but that number has been climbing recently and ballooned to 43 in the past year. The reason for the increase?

"Everybody's puzzled," Maughan said.

Whatever the reason, more bears means the center needs more money. About half the center's funding comes from the London-based World Society for the Protection of Animals, and half from private donations. But Maughan said she needs more money to accommodate a growing number of cubs sent her way, as well as for planned projects like a roof for the bears' pen and monitoring devices for animals once they are released back into the wilderness.

So Maughan tapped Hooper, who agreed to design cards and posters featuring black bears, to raise funds for the center. The cards and posters are available at Prints Plus and Jordan's Hallmark stores.

"It seemed like such a unique program," Hooper said. "If you see the number of bears she affects, it's a huge program that doesn't get any spotlight or recognition."

Maughan works from home for a travel agency and spends the rest of her time in her attached rehab center playing mom to young bears: bottle feeding them until they switch to the black bear's omnivorous diet, monitoring behavior and cleaning up after them.

"Each is special, each has its own personality," she said. "I enjoy them while they're here. There are some that will make me cry out of frustration, some make me laugh myself silly."

After raising the bears for eight or nine months, Maughan releases them back into the wilds of their home states.

"It's like sending your kids to college: You love them and you hate to see them go, but you're happy for them and you have your life back," she said.

Inside, Local 5

Where to buy the cards

How you can help

Want to buy a card?

They're available at Prints Plus and Jordan's Hallmark stores and online at www.bearrehab.org.

Want to learn more or donate money?

E-mail the center at infobearrehab.org

To offer story ideas or comments, contact reporter Heath Druzin at hdruzinidahostatesman.com or 373-6617.

Cutline: Napali, a 12-week-old orphaned black bear cub, plays with her new mom, Sally Maughan, at the Idaho Black Bear Rehab center. Napali was close to dying of malnutrition near Olympia, Wash., before arriving at the center, Maughan said.

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