



International Bear News

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Tracking the Status of Brown Bear Conservation in Greece, page 12

IBBR Finally Gets Solid Roof Over Main Bear Enclosure

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During the fall of 2004 and into 2005, Idaho Black Bear Rehab, Inc. (IBBR) received 40 orphaned cubs from Idaho and surrounding states. Due to their condition, most of the bears couldn't hibernate, and we had active bears all winter. By late fall, the bears either ate or tromped down all the vegetation and grass. By winter, it was slick and slippery; the bears loved it, but we ended up on our rears a few times. Then the spring rains came with a vengeance. Since

the main enclosure wasn't covered except for a wood deck area over some of the dens, it became a muddy mess.

The one thing I insist on in rehab is that the animals can stay dry and protected from the weather. If they want to go out in the snow or rain, I have no problem with that. It's a totally different matter when they can't get out of the weather. The rain was so heavy and so frequent that there wasn't one day for about a month that we didn't have at least three inches of water all over the main enclosure.

The bears had torn up all the wood deck covering the dens so the dens were flooded too. We had several hollow logs to use for dens too, but they were flooded inside. The bears could climb on them to get out of the mud but still had no protection from the rain.

Once again, the bears seemed to be having a great deal of fun despite the fact their foster mom was extremely upset. One of the favorite games was to go flying by at full bear speed just as I walked through the deepest puddle. Water and mud went flying

everywhere, especially all over me. I'm sure they just wanted to share the fun and didn't realize that grumpy old mom wasn't having any fun or maybe they did realize it!

I swore we would not go one more year without a roof over that enclosure, but I knew we couldn't raise that kind of money. Estimates started out at US\$15,000, dropped down to US\$12,000, and then, due to some of the building requirements, ended up at US\$16,000.

Once again, WSPA stepped in and saved us. They funded the cost of all the materials. Garden City Planning and Zoning worked with us to get the plan approved quickly. Buck Peak, a Fish and Game construction foreman, and the Poachers Club (no, they are not poachers) volunteered all the labor. We started building in August 2005 and were done the end of September.

Half the roof is covered with green metal sheets and the other half with clear sheets that let the sun in. The cubs of 2004 never got to enjoy it, but when the spring rains came this year,

Captive Bears

it was so wonderful to see cubs on dry ground. There is still a small area in the front section where they can play in the rain if they want to.

In 2005, the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) donated the funds to buy a new Ford flatbed truck for transporting bears. We used it while releasing some of the 2004 bears. Being able to transport four carriers at one time was especially helpful when transporting out-of-state yearlings back to the release state. It has saved us so much time, work, and money in the release part of the rehab process. We had volunteers who wanted to help transport bears, but the metal carriers were too large for their vehicles. Now they can use the IBBR truck to transport bears for us. A truck and a roof in the same year – two dreams come true for IBBR in the same year, thanks to WSPA!

In the next two to three months, IBBR will be installing a monitoring system in the main enclosure. This will allow us to observe and film bear behavior without disturbing the bears.

as they either see, smell, hear, or sense our presence. Then we become the cause of the behavior and the focus of their attention. If it's possible, we will be adding live video feed to our website. Then bear projects, other bear rehabilitators, state agencies, schools, etc. can view the bears while in rehab and learn along with us.

Conservation Education

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Water's Edge Exhibit at the Pittsburgh Zoo & Aquarium

The first phase of Water's Edge

Aquarium. The exhibit will feature sea otters and walrus, along with the two polar bears already on display. The planning team evaluated some of the most sophisticated polar bear enclosures around the country before embarking on plans to construct this latest enclosure for the new additions to the zoo. The staff's vision was to develop a "tundra" habitat which both immerses the patrons in an arctic ecosystem and provides year round conditions favorable to polar mammals. Patrons can observe the animals in an air-conditioned den. They can also view the animals through a 30-foot acrylic tunnel. The bears can be viewed both above and below the water surface of their marine pool. Water's Edge conveys several conservation issues relevant to marine mammals but emphasizes the importance of these mega-vertebrates as indicators of polar ecosystem health.

Next Issue: Opening of Asia Trail, the new sloth bear exhibit at the