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Twister and four other bears set free in Idaho

After a long and bumpy ride, Twister stepped out of her crate, looked around and jumped off the back of the truck that had carried her and four other bears from Idaho Black Bear Rehab (IBBR) into the wilderness outside of Boise. She didn't look back as she dashed down a dirt path and bolted into the woods to begin her new life.

Twister's story began last summer, when she was found wandering alone after a tornado struck Bear, Idaho. The weak, starving cub weighed only seven pounds when she was brought to IBBR bear rehabilitation center in Garden City, Idaho.

"Twister had a strong will to live and willingness to accept what she needed to survive," recalls Sally Maughan, a wildlife rehabilitator who heads IBBR and has been a foster mother to orphaned cubs since 1989. Maughan spent months caring for Twister—bottle-feeding her with a special diet, nursing her back to health, and eventually moving her into a large outdoor enclosure with other bears her age.

Thanks to Maughan's expert care and rehabilitation techniques, Twister and four other Black Bears joined the more than 140 cubs that have been successfully raised and released back into the wild by IBBR. Only a few years ago, bears such as Twister would have faced life in captivity or euthanasia. Now, thanks to IBBR's unique bear cub rehabilitation and release program, Twister and other orphaned cubs have a second chance at life.

Working together for bears



From a larger enclosure to care for more bears to a new roof and the flatbed truck that transported Twister and other bears, WSPA has been there to support IBBR's work since 1998. In addition to providing major funding and technical support, WSPA has also supported IBBR as they develop methods now being shared with bear rehabilitation specialists around the world, including those working to save endangered species.

"Without WSPA's support and encouragement, IBBR would not be here today," says Maughan. "Many orphaned cubs like Twister owe their lives and second chance at freedom to WSPA."

Another happy ending

And how does Maughan feel about Twister's new life? "I'm so glad she pulled through," says Maughan. "Twister's a little fighter and now she'll be free. I have a vision of her in the woods being a bear—that's my happy ending for Twister."

Fitted with a satellite radio collar that will fall off after several months, Twister's progress will be tracked by the Idaho Department of Fish and Game, and shared with IBBR.

Although she'll always remember Twister, Maughan is now focused on caring for rare triplet cubs brought to IBBR in May after their mother was illegally killed by a bear baiting hunter. She's working towards the day next year when they'll be ready to begin new lives as independent bears, just like Twister.



Testimonial

"The funding that WSPA provides keeps IBBR (Idaho Black Bear Rehabilitation) going, but it's far more than that. Working in animal protection and rehabilitation is hard, but I always know WSPA will be there for encouragement and support in so many other ways. I never feel like I am in this alone."

Sally Maughan
President and Founder
of Idaho Black Bear
Rehabilitation (IBBR), a
WSPA Member Society