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# The Idaho Statesman

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### Facial surgery on black bear deemed successful

*Katy Moeller**kmoeller@idahostatesman.com**Katy Moeller: 377-6413*

The patient lay sound asleep on the surgical table as if in hibernation, the pads of his upturned paws peeking out from under a blue sheet.

"He's got long claws," said Susan Gale, a technician at WestVet Emergency & Specialty Center in Garden City.

The 150-pound **black bear** had **surgery** for a months-old gunshot wound and drew a small crowd of vet clinic onlookers Wednesday.

The nearly 3-year-old **bear** had been walking around with a 2-inch hole in his sinus cavity since late summer, when he was shot in the **face**.

Dr. Jeff D. Brouman, a small-animal surgeon, performed a two-hour skin-flap procedure that closed the hole. It required 35 to 40 stitches and left a curving 6- to 8-inch track on the **bear's** shaved **face**.

"It looks tremendous," said Sally Maughan, founder of Garden City-based Idaho **Black Bear** Rehab, which is caring for the **bear** until he can be released into the wild. He was one of 53 **bears** the group took in during 2007.

The **black bear's** fur was a mixture of colors, few of which were **black**. John Beecham, a rehab volunteer who will release the **bear** when he's healed, said brown-haired **black bears** are common south of the Salmon River.

"Sixty-five percent are **black** north of the Salmon River," said Beecham, explaining that climate and age help determine hair color.

Beecham said the wound in the **bear's** **face** had to be closed to prevent infections. "With that open hole, we were afraid an infection might go into his brain," he said.

The **bear** was trapped near Stanley by a U.S. Fish & Wildlife official who was tipped off that the animal was near a campground. He noticed the **bear's** injury and contacted Idaho **Black Bear** Rehab.

In late August or early September, Dr. Tim Murphy in Boise cleaned the **bear's** wound and removed the shrapnel.

Brouman said the **surgery** was planned for the **bear's** natural hibernation period, when he would be less likely to pull the stitches out.

The stitches will be removed in about two weeks.

Maughan was in the operating room during the more-than-two-hour procedure Wednesday.

"He's won everybody's hearts - he's just a big, old mellow **bear**," she said.

Kerry Maloney / kmaloney@idahostatesman.com

Dr. Jeff Brouman checks **on** the stitches he inserted **on** a 3-year-old male **black bear** during a two-hour facial reconstruction **surgery** Wednesday at WestVet Emergency and Specialty Center. The **bear has** been in rehabilitation since being shot in the **face**. His nasal passage was exposed, making **surgery** necessary for his survival.

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