



# Bears

# in Mind

## Rehab worker guides cubs back to the wild.

**M**any women know what it's like to be a den mother. But Sally Maughan's cub pack members are real live bears.

"The cubs seem to accept that I'm Mama Bear—they know they're safe with me," says Sally, the founder of Idaho Black Bear Rehab.

On her acreage in Garden City, ID, Sally maintains tidy chain-link enclosures as a temporary habitat for orphaned black bears. All the bear necessities are provided—food to eat, trees to climb and other bears to play with.



"Cubs are very instinctive, so I don't need to 'teach' them to be bears," she notes. "I give them the security and time needed to go through their stages of development. From the minute they get here, I focus on returning them to the wilderness.

"Many cubs—most motherless—are brought here in spring by wildlife agencies after hunters, hikers or land owners spot and report them. We've accepted cubs from Utah, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Wyoming, California and our home state. Infants have arrived weighing just a few ounces and need to be fed formula every 2 hours around the clock."

Passionate about animals since she was a girl, Sally has served for years as a volunteer wildlife rehabilitator while also working a full-time job from home.

"Twenty years ago, the Fish and Game Department brought me an adorable bear cub to care for," she recalls. "It's been

all about bears ever since.

"At that time, few experts believed orphaned cubs could be successfully rehabilitated and released by humans. It was said they'd become comfortable with people and turn into problem bears. Our program has proven that's not true." Follow-up observations

and tracking suggest most of the bears Sally has released are doing just fine.

As a nonprofit organization, her cub refuge relies on public funding.

That means donations help cover the grocery bills run up by her wild-mannered wards.

Once weaned, the bears thrive on a diet including dry dog food, fish, vegetation and fresh fruit by the crates.

### Second Chances

"When they leave us, after 8 or 9 months, most cubs weigh over 130 pounds and stand 4 to 5 feet tall," Sally says. "Releasing them is an all-day project. We tranquilize the bears, get weights and measurements, ear tag and radio-collar the females, and get them settled in metal transport carriers in our flatbed truck.

"Our release sites are in the backcountry, away from populated areas. We either take them to empty dens we've found or to artificial dens we build ourselves."

In her rare free time, Sally offers educational seminars on black bears to schools, church groups, scout troops and others. She's also sought after as a consultant by wildlife rehabilitators in other states who hope to start their own bear rescue and




PHOTOS: BEINDA ISLEY, LARRY AND TERI LIMBERG



**Born free.** Sally Maughan is one of the few bear rehabilitators in the United States. **1. & 2.** She takes orphaned cubs, unable to care for themselves, and prepares them for return to their habitat. **3., 4. & 5.** Release-ready cubs are tranquilized, tagged and transported to the backcountry to resume their wild ways.

release programs.

And when it's time to give a cub its freedom, "I suppose it's similar to what parents go through when the children they've raised head off to college," Sally says. "You're sad to see them go, but you're happy they're starting their own independent lives, and grateful for the gifts they've given you." 

**Editor's Note:** For more on the Idaho Black Bear Rehab program, go to Sally's Web site through ours, clicking "Links."