



In this issue:

2013 Grizzly Bear Release	1
Great Enrichment Idea	2
Bird Vaccine for West Nile Virus	3
Wildlife Health Event Reporter	4



2013 Grizzly Bear Release

Angelika Langen, Northern Lights Wildlife Shelter, President, WRNBC

An orphaned grizzly bear that was found near starvation six months ago headed back home to the wild in Golden on Monday after filling up on grapes at a rehabilitation centre that nursed it back to health.

Tika, whose name means Brave One in a First Nations language, was cared for at the Northern Lights Wildlife Society, which runs a unique pilot project in partnership with the International Fund for Animal Welfare and British Columbia's forests and environment ministries. The grizzly wandered into a backyard last December and was captured by a conservation officer and then brought to the centre in Smithers, a three-hour truck ride away, just before Christmas.

Angelika Langen, who co-owns the centre with her husband Peter, said the weak and skinny six-month-old cub weighed about 15 kilograms, about a third of what it should have weighed, when it arrived.



Photo: John Beecham

It had bulked up to 72 kilograms by the time it left on Monday. Instead of hibernating, Tika spent the winter noshing on meat, fish, fruit, vegetables, dandelions and its favourite treat — grapes.

"He's a feisty little fellow," Langen said of the bear who had no trouble bossing around other grizzlies. "We had two brothers and he was much smaller than the two brothers but he was still telling them where to go and what to do."

Perhaps Tika's superiority had something to do with its fur, which was twice as long as what the other grizzlies were sporting. "That can have to do with the fact that he was starved so much that he couldn't change his fur as quickly as the others did," Langen said.

"He's just a cutie, he's really a nice little bear," Langen said on her way to drop Tika off in a remote part of Golden, away from humans.

Continued on page 2...

Continued from page 1...

The grizzly was fitted with a satellite collar and will be monitored for 18 months so researchers can determine whether releasing orphaned bears is viable. "He is all healthy and rambunctious now so we're very excited that he recuperated this well, that we can let him go," Langen said.

"It's always a little bit of a concern because you don't know what they encounter out there. You're happy that you can give them this chance because without us being able to do this there wouldn't be an option for him at all. He would be dead, right?"

Tika is the eleventh grizzly to be rescued, rehabilitated and released into the wild by the centre since 2008 as part of the project that appears to be successful, Langen said. Langen said she and her husband, who worked in zoos in Germany before immigrating to Canada, started the centre in 1990 after hearing about two moose that were killed when their mother was hit by a train.

She said the centre would like to follow a female bear that's been able to reproduce after it's been transferred back to the wild. "Scientifically, that would prove they're able to mate with a wild bear and they know how to look after their own young."



The collar of one of two females already released malfunctioned and the other was removed by the bear itself after hibernation, Langen said. "There's no easy solutions in this. It's a patience game and we'll just keep doing it until we have all the data so everybody can say it's working.

"We're hoping that the government would consider this as a normal part of its bear management plan."

The International Fund for Animal Welfare provides the centre with collars at a cost of \$5,000 each for the animals returned to the wild.

The B.C. government grants a permit for the Langens' rehabilitation centre, which takes in other animals as well and is currently caring for moose and foxes, although most of the residents are bears. The Langens modeled their program after a similar one in Russia, and another one has since opened in India.

Article courtesy of the Vancouver Sun



Photo: Paul Steeves



Wildlife rehabilitators are always looking for new and creative ways to (affordably) provide cage enrichment. The Wildlife Rescue Association of BC took advantage of this donation of old fire hoses from their local detachment to create climbing apparatuses for recovering squirrels. Contact your own local firehouse to see if they may do the same for your facility!

News Briefs

Bird Vaccine for West Nile Virus

<http://news.ubc.ca/2013/07/09/bird-vaccine-for-west-nile-virus/>

University of British Columbia researchers have developed a vaccine that may halt the spread of West Nile Virus (WNV) among common and endangered bird species.

WNV, a mosquito borne pathogen, arrived in North America in 1999 and is now endemic across the continent. In 2012 alone, WNV killed 286 people in the United States, and 42 people have died from the virus in Canada since 2002. There is currently no effective vaccine against WNV infection in humans or birds.



Common birds such as crows, ravens and jays, and endangered species such as the Greater Sage-Grouse and the Eastern Loggerhead Shrike, are also susceptible to WNV infection, with mortality rates in some species and populations as high as 100 per cent.

“West Nile Virus has been identified as a threat contributing to the extinction of some rare bird species and its presence in common birds facilitates the spread of the disease,” says Joanne Young, lead author of a study recently published in *PLOS ONE* and a PhD student in UBC’s Michael Smith Laboratories and Department of Zoology. “A bird vaccine would go a long way to helping combat these adverse effects.”



Young and Prof. Wilfred Jefferies developed and tested a vaccine made from components of WNV and found it generated an effective immune response in birds. This may protect against the spread of virus not only among birds but also to other species. The team will now study the vaccine’s effectiveness in protecting birds against mortality caused by the disease.

Jefferies is a researcher in UBC’s Michael Smith Laboratories, the Brain Research Centre, and the Centre for Blood Research at UBC. Jefferies is also a member of a UBC’s departments of Medical Genetics, Microbiology and Immunology, and Zoology. Young was partially funded by a Commonwealth Scholarship.

For more information on WNV, visit <http://www.bccdc.ca/dis-cond/a-z/w/WestNileVirus/default.htm>.

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Wildlife Health Event Reporter: Invitation to Wildlife Rehabilitators

The Wildlife Data Integration Network, a program at the University of Wisconsin - Madison, School of Veterinary Medicine, is hosting a web-based demonstration of the Wildlife Health Event Reporter (WHER).

This publicly available tool gathers observations of sick, injured, or dead wild animals as well as functions as an alerting system that can quickly distribute reports to those concerned about potential emerging wildlife health issues.

In addition, WHER can be used to log and track wildlife health calls from the public, especially for those unfortunate events where no action can be taken. These observations can be at least recorded and added to a collective body of knowledge for the greater understanding of wildlife health issues. For more information visit, www.wher.org.



Have a great case study to share? Spread your expert knowledge!



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Submission Deadlines
Winter – December 15
Spring – March 15
Summer – June 15
Fall – September 15

2013 BC Land Based Spill Preparedness and Response Symposium

In March 2013, the BC Ministry of Environment hosted this symposium which brought together industry experts, response organizations, government and regulators as well as wildlife stakeholders. The Symposium papers and associated information are now available online and open to the public.

<http://www.env.gov.bc.ca/eemp/symposium/participants.html>

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