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Bear cub collected in downtown Dillon

By Elaine Spicer

Montana Fish Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) Game Warden Kerry Wahl was woken up in the "wee hours of the morning" on Sunday, September 26, with the caller reporting a small black bear in the downtown area of Dillon.

The caller, Dillon Police Officer Ken Breen, had seen the bear cub in Vigilante Field, says Wahl. "Myself, Ken Breen, and another individual watched it run on the north side of the stadium seats," adds Wahl. "I could tell it was a small black bear."

In the darkness, the cub was able to elude those searching for it. "I looked around for it as daylight came, and somewhere around 11:00 a.m., Officer Paul Craft came into sight of the bear."

"In the ensuing melee, you might say," adds Wahl, "he got into a backyard on Thomsen, kittycorner to the B.W. Lodge Gym." The cub climbed into a tree, apparently believing it was safer territory. The cub is believed to be male.

"I put together a tranquilizer dart," explains Wahl. "The shot to the bear was difficult through the limbs and leaves of the tree." The bear felt the effects of the drug within just a few minutes, he says, but, falling through the tree branches, got hung up in the tree. "I had to climb up and shake the tree to get him out," says Wahl.

Wahl says he isn't sure who owns the home where the bear temporarily took up residence, and no one appeared to be home.

The cub, in the neighborhood of 45-50 pounds, says Wahl, looked very much like a bear he'd darted one week before in the Dillon area.

That bear, which Wahl believes was a female, was discovered on Highway 91 North in the vicinity of Dillon Auto. "It was also about 45-50 pounds. The second one was almost a cookie cutter of the first, likely, they're brother and sister. If they are siblings, their mother is either dead or kicked them loose. It is bear season. The cubs were probably not ready to be out on their own."

The cub was taken to the Dillon MFWP office to cool down. "We let it cool down in the shade," notes Wahl. "The drug I administered has a tendency to make the bear heat up."

The male cub was released about 50 miles south of Dillon, and the female was released in the same area. "Fifty miles is a decent standard. The plan is to get them way out of there," explains Wahl.

He notes he hopes no hunters attempt to take advantage of the bears' situation, stressing that the meat, were the bears to be killed, would "probably have to be condemned because of the drugs. The drugs stay in their system for a couple of weeks."

He adds that both young bears appeared to be in good physical condition, and his belief is that they should both "be okay".

"Obviously," he says, "they were both out of where they should be. They kind of get confused in a town, with all the sights and sounds.

Obviously, the city community is not their natural home. They are entering their heavy feeding period, trying to fatten up for their winter hibernation. In town, they may be attracted to garbage or other food sources."

"It's been an interesting week," he adds. "Two bears in one week."

Wahl suggests anyone sighting a bear in or around town call the Beaverhead County Sheriff's Office at 683-3700 or the Dillon MFWP Office at 683-4258.

Bear encounter

A tranquilized male black bear cub is taken out of a backyard in Dillon where he climbed a tree, attempting to elude pursuers. A cooperative effort between city and county law enforcement personnel and Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks Game Warden Kerry Wahl netted the 45-50 pound youngster, who was released into the wild about 50 miles south of Dillon. Photo courtesy Owen James

STARS fall on Dillon

Offering trauma training

Photos and Story By Elaine Spicer

A patient with a potentially life-threatening illness...emergency personnel doing their best to determine the extent of an accident victim's injuries....an exciting emergency situation, with little room for error. All can be part of the workday for emergency room personnel, ambulance attendants, or any other medical worker. The opportunity to face the challenge of meeting a patient's needs often doesn't come with a second chance. But, this week, local healthcare workers are being offering the chance to deal with such medical emergencies with the only results being a thoughtful de-briefing session through a training offered by the Alberta Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS) Team and sponsored by the Barrett Hospital Foundation.

The team is offer the training in their state of the art Mobile Human Patient Simulator (HPS), includinge a very special "patient", usually referred to as "Stan", who is a mannequin. Tuesday's trainings stuck with the name of "Chad" for the various scenarios offered to medical workers.

Chad, a computerized mannequin who was "talks" and "breathes", has palpable "pulses", with eyes that blink and pupils that react to light. The mannequin not only displays realistic movements and sounds, but has an anatomically correct airway, allowing for intubation and other airway management skills practice, and allows for chest tubes, catheters, defribillation such. Drugs can be administered with realistic physiological effects and toxicity, explain STARS Team members.

Behind the scenes, a medical scenario is created, with those working with the patient receiving only the minimal information that would actually be available in the emergency room. Information is relayed by the STARS Team to those observing, including the kinds and amounts of medications administered. The computerized mannequin then responds to the treatment.

"If you have fun with the technology, which is a lot more sophisticated than "Rescuci-Annie", you'll get more out of it," noted Bonnie Sproule, RN and STARS Team Leader. "You just have to troubleshoot and decide how you're going to take care of this big guy," she added, referring to the mannequin. "Talk to him, be hands-on. He'll talk to you. If you buy into the realism, you'll ahve more fun and get more out of it."

In one session, Chad, a 54 year old male, was brought into the emergency room following an ATV accident. Admitting to having had three or four beers, and to wearing no helmet while riding, the "patient" fell 50 feet down an embankment, hitting a stump along the way. Chad, attempting to "talk" to the workers, made comments such as, "help me...I'm in pain"..."Oh, God, I hurt"...and, "who are you?"

To those questions, just as with a real patient, training participants responded, asking where he hurt, telling him they would help him, and explaining who they were.

After "intubating" the patient, the staff saw he was still having difficulties, and one member of the crew, Becky Hoffman, RN, getting into the act, said, "we need to get him to the O.R. This guy needs surgery."

Following the scenario, all participants and STARS Team members gathered to discuss how it went.

"At first you didn't act as if he was real," noted STARS Team member Jeff Plant during the discussion following the emergency trauma scenario. "Then, you started to respond to him. You examined the patient, which is what you would do in the "emerg" [emergency room]. If you examine him, he'll give you clues."

"You had a multi-system trauma patient requiring prioritization of what you were going to do," continued Plant, an emergency physician with the STARS Team, a non-profit organization, which provides rapid,specialized emergency aeromedical transport system to critically ill and injured patients. Also part of the team offering the special training was Alexis Mageau, RN.

A second scenario featured a "patient" who was a young college student with an unknown medical condition and experiencing difficulty breathing. Attempting to address the immediate needs of the "patient", just as in a true emergency, those participating in the scenario administered medications to enable him to breathe and to release fluids, as he seemed to be in need of dialysis, a treatment unavailable locally.

Following the session, Plant noted, "he needs dialysis, so you start thinking about transport." Asking what the participants thought of the scenario, all agreed it was hard but good. In the end, they learned the "patient" had an

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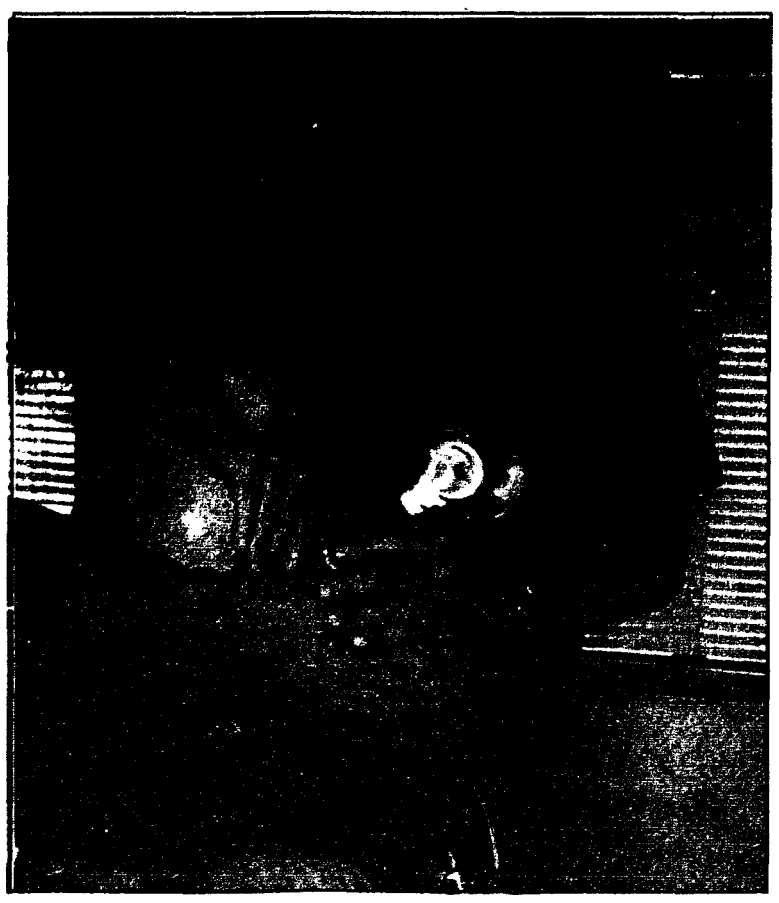

Emergency situation

Above, Barrett Hospital's Dean Mathers, RN, Becky Hoffman, RN, and Ramona Potter, Head of E.R. work to sustain the life of their "patient", a mannequin named "Chad", during a simulation of a crisis sponsored this week by the Barrett Hospital Foundation and offered by the Alberta Shock Trauma Air Rescue Society (STARS) Team.

Oxygen

At left, Barrett Hospital and HealthCare R.N. Dean Mathers helps his "patient" breathe, administering oxygen manually.

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