

GETTING TO KNOW WILDLIFE – Our Own Little Bear



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The call came one Friday afternoon from a young lady who said she found a bear cub. An adult had been recently killed on the road near by. She said she had picked the cub up and walked home with it. My first thought was, could this really be a bear cub if she just picked it up? Given the lateness of the season cubs would not really be happy to be scooped up. I thought perhaps she had a young groundhog and just thought it was a newborn bear cub (they are only the size of a hamster when they are born). When I asked her why she thought it was a bear, she replied, “because it looks like a bear”. Good answer! I must admit that I was still a little bit skeptical that it was

in fact a bear cub. Regardless, I went over how to keep the bear secure and safe during transport and not to handle it further.

When I hung up with her I put up on the intake board: bear cub with a question mark and the time it should arrive. It did not take long for word to spread with Centre staff and volunteers and everyone anxiously awaited its arrival.

I tried to caution them not to get their hopes up, as it may not be a bear, but sure enough, it was a bear cub that arrived. It was dehydrated, emaciated, weighed under ten pounds, with a severe case of mange. To say that it was skin and bones would be an understatement and it was as weak as it was thin- it had not been doing well since mom had died.

First thing was to give sub-Q fluid to help re-hydrate him. Next up was some food. We made a mixture of fruit baby

food and formula, which looked like a milkshake. We put the shake in a 30cc feeding syringe. I went into the cage, sat down and slowly moved towards the cub. After a bit of pawing at the ground and jaw popping on the part of the bear, and a bit of nervousness on my part, all was good and feeding time progressed very well. In fact, blueberry shakes turned out to be his favourite. Once the cub was stabilized we began treatment for mange. After a few weeks he was a new bear, his fur was shiny, his eyes were clear and he was moving about.

Our bear was now ready to move to another sanctuary to spend the winter. With more room and even some friends for him it was the perfect place to learn, play and grow. He was returned to the wild where we like to hope he still roams today.