

Cubs were probably born in January

**BEARS continued
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inside the large hollowed-out log and a set of eyes was looking out.”

The fallers left the area and called Vandeborgh, who contacted Dirksen to see if Grand Ronde Natural Resources Department staff could help determine the status of the compromised den. Everyone feared that the nearby logging operations spooked mother bear into abandoning her cubs.

Dirksen set up three trail cameras to determine whether mother bear was returning to her cubs, as well as try to determine the condition of the cubs.

“One was right at the opening and the two others were at angles that captured the opening of the log,” Dirksen said.

On Wednesday morning, the video footage showed that momma bear returned at about 5 a.m. and left 80 minutes later.

“She should be with them all night,” Dirksen said. “Hibernating, providing food and warmth to the cubs.”

The cubs, which were probably born in January, had their eyes open, were fully covered in fur and were tiny, Dirksen said.

“We were concerned they were not going to make it,” Dirksen said. “We told Don that we know the end of this story. There was cutting all around here. Bears don’t have a backup plan. I would question if she had another place to take her cubs even if she returned.”

But Vandeborgh convinced Dirksen into giving momma bear one more night to return to her cubs.

On Thursday morning, Dirksen, Grand Ronde Tribal biologist Nate Brece, Oregon State Police Senior Trooper Adam Turnbo and mem-



Photo courtesy of Colby Drake

Logan Kneeland, Tribal Silviculture & Fire Protection technician, holds one of three bear cubs that were saved by loggers and state and Grand Ronde Tribal employees from almost certain starvation on Thursday, Feb. 20. The cubs are now at the Oregon Zoo, receiving care and feeding and will eventually end up at a zoo in Austin, Texas.

bers of the falling crew returned to the den. After checking the footage from Wednesday night, which did not show a return visit from mother bear, Dirksen said it was time to save the cubs, who were crying.

“The writing was on the wall,” Dirksen said. “There was no reason she was going to come back.”

Dirksen and Brece climbed into the log, passing the three cubs – two females and one male – up as if putting out a fire in a bucket brigade, and members of the falling crew tucked the cubs into their jackets, keeping them warm until they reached Turnbo’s truck. Turnbo, meanwhile, stood guard just in case mother bear was nearby or returned.

“Those guys put a lot into trying to protect those cubs,” Dirksen said. “Kirk Luoto and his crew probably

did more than most to save these guys.”

The cubs were placed in a makeshift cardboard nest created by Natural Resources Department staff members. The nest included a used fire crew sleeping bag to keep the cubs warm and comfortable.

Turnbo drove the cubs to ODFW’s Corvallis-area wildlife health lab, where they were temporarily cared for by veterinary staff, lab biologists and a fourth-year veterinary student from the University of Minnesota, said Wildlife Communications Coordinator Michelle Dennehy.

The bear cubs were then moved to the Oregon Zoo on Friday, Feb. 21. “The zoo can offer the continuous care the cubs need,” she said.

Oregon Zoo Media and Public Relations Officer Hova Najarian said the cubs will be picked up by Austin Zoo & Animal Sanctuary employees and driven to their new home.

Patti Clark, executive director of the Austin Zoo, said her facility has always been a rescue facility and is home to mostly very young and older animals. The bears will occupy an enclosure space that is now empty after the recent deaths of two cougars from old age. It includes a pool and inside dens.

Clark said Austin Zoo employees have been at the Oregon Zoo since Sunday, Feb. 23, assisting with the care and feeding of the bears.

Dirksen, who has more than 20

years experience with timber sales in the Grand Ronde area, said this is the first time that he remembers bear cubs being orphaned by logging operations, but the situation occurs annually for wildlife officials.

“ODFW deals with orphaned bears every year and typically we place bear cubs two to four times a year,” Dennehy said. “Cubs can be orphaned for a variety of reasons, such as mother is killed ... hit by a car or killed by a hunter although hunting regulations prohibit killing sows with cubs. Sometimes we see people picking up and taking home young bears or other animals who they wrongly believe to be orphaned.”

Dennehy said it is uncommon for the situation to occur with logging involved. “But it does occasionally,” she added.

The Oregon Zoo also is currently nursing three orphaned cougar cubs. The zoo’s keepers have cared for the trio since early January, when an eastern Oregon hunter killed their mother.

The cougar cubs will eventually be sent to the North Carolina Zoo in Asheboro, N.C.

“ODFW’s staff worked to get the cougar kittens to the Oregon Zoo and final placement in North Carolina,” Dennehy said.

Dirksen said the response to the orphaned bear cubs was exemplary by all participants. He complimented the logging crew, which stopped working once they realized they had happened upon an occupied bear den and called it in promptly to state wildlife officials.

He said the incident is a good example of state-Tribal cooperation on the ground, from Tribal staff assisting understaffed Fish and Wildlife Department employees to working with Oregon State Police for transportation.

“We all know what a softie Kelly Dirksen is where baby animals are concerned, but it must have been quite a sight to see those tree fallers being so careful of those little cubs,” said Grand Ronde Public Affairs Director Siobhan Taylor.

“It speaks to the conservation awareness of Stimson and their employees, as well as the intergovernmental cooperation between the state Department of Fish and Wildlife, State Police and the Grand Ronde Tribe. All of them worked together to properly observe the situation and save the cubs.” ■

BOOK FOR SALE

“The Kalapuyans: A sourcebook on the Indians of the Willamette Valley”
by Harold Mackey, Ph.D.



This book, through collaboration between the Cultural Resources Department, Mission Mill Museum, and the Mackey Family, has been re-released in a second edition with a new cover, an updated bibliography with more current and accurate sources, new photographs, and a new afterward explaining the Grand Ronde Tribal perspective.

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Books may be purchased from the Tribe’s Cultural Resources Department located on the second floor of Tribal Building 14 (Adult Education Building) for \$13.00 each. To have an order mailed to you, please fill out this form and include an additional \$3.00 for shipping cost per book.

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The Kalapuyans
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Grand Ronde, OR
97347

Mothers of Tradition training set

The White Bison Mothers of Tradition training is returning to the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde on May 20-22 at the Tribal Community Center, 9615 Grand Ronde Road.

The purpose of the training is to increase awareness of how intergenerational trauma interrupted the culture, language, family ties and parenting practices among Native peoples. Participants will learn how to apply the cultural teachings to bring healing to children and relationships.

The training is free, but people must register to attend. Attendees must make a three-day commitment and be there from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

For more information or to register, contact Karan Scharf at 503-879-2029. Native Americans working in organizations that specialize in treatment, recovery and wellness should attend, as well as non-Native professionals working in Native American communities, counselors, therapists, prevention specialists and community members.

The training is sponsored by the Tribe’s Behavioral Health Program and funded by the Meth and Suicide Prevention Initiative grant. ■