

Li'l Smokey's rescue retold in captivating book

Publisher's Note: *California Department of Fish & Game reports Li'l Smokey's signal was picked up via telemetry on Sept. 30 in the same general area where he has been heard from in the past.*

By Susan Wood

CalFire firefighter Adam Deem will carry a story of a lifetime, but it doesn't involve saving a home or human.

The Redding-area forester, who has fought blazes since being a teenager, made national headlines when he saved a bear cub in July 2008 – a season marked as one of the worst for wildfires in California history.

His story and that of bear cub Li'l Smokey are brought to life in the book "Saving Li'l Smokey – A True Story." Deem's rescue and diligence along with the rehabilitative expertise of Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care are all part of the book.

The journey of Li'l Smokey from his burned paws to being released back to the wild in early 2009 is chronicled in this children's book. (I enjoyed it so much I'm not sure it really should be categorized as a kids' book.)

Deem and his wife, Celeste, co-wrote the short story. Illustrations are by art student Ryan Lamb. The art is so good it's as if Lamb was with Deem and Li'l Smokey during the ordeal.

After working 27 consecutive days, Deem recounts his drive up to Shoemaker Bally beyond Whiskeytown Lake near Redding and finding the cub limping with melted paws. Even the most cynical reader can't help but hurry through the pages to

discover what happens next.

Page by page, the book is apt to prompt readers of all ages to coo at the heartwarming firsthand account and artwork of the little bear's early defiance-turned-gratefulness. Amid the tragedy of fire, the cub's rescue presents an uplifting turn-of-events in Northern California.

One cute note, Deem must have pondered long and hard about the noise the bear cub made in displeasure. Hint, that's on Page 7.

The self-published book is available at Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care (www.ltwc.org). A portion of the proceeds of the book benefit the wildlife rehab center outside South Lake Tahoe. For more on the story, go to www.lilsmokey.net.