

Deputy accidentally kills bear; 2 cubs now without mom

By Kathryn Reed

A deputy not knowing he was shooting live ammunition and a tenant with more than a month's worth of garbage contributed to one bear being killed Friday night in Stateline and two cubs being orphaned.

"The odds are against those cubs," is what Chris Healy with the Nevada Department of Wildlife told *Lake Tahoe News*.

This is because normally the cubs would be spending the winter in a den with mom. It's possible they will know to find a den, but it's also possible the youngsters – albeit they are 60 pounds – won't know what to do as winter arrives.

However, Healy said if the bears can be captured and they are healthy, they would probably be taken outside the Lake Tahoe area so they would be less likely to become garbage bears. The other possibility is taking the bears – if caught – to a rehab place that knows about hibernation techniques.

Chuck Arnold, who owns the trailer where the bear and her cubs were foraging for food, today began the eviction process for his tenants.

Arnold said he received a frantic call from his tenant about 9:30pm Oct. 28. They also had called the Douglas County Sheriff's Office. He said the people had been living there three months and gave him no reason for storing garbage in the garage for more than a month.

"It's unfortunate we lost a bear. She was part of the community," Arnold said. "My issue is with the resident. I want to remind people not to hold on to trash in bear season –

that there are consequences.”

According to the sheriff’s department, deputies scared off one bear and treed two. Two rubber-projectile wildlife control rounds were fired at the bears, but to no avail.

A deputy, whose name is not being released, thought he was firing a rubber bullet. Instead, it was regular rifle ammo. The wounded bear then had to be put down.

“In this incident, in the darkness the deputy incorrectly stacked his rounds by mistake, thereby making the second round fired out of the shotgun a rifled slug rather than a rubber-projectile wildlife control round,” Sgt. Jim Halsey said in a press release.

The sheriff’s office will be conducting an investigation.

Healy on Monday afternoon said a game warden is still waiting to speak with the sheriff’s department.

His department set a trap for the cubs, but instead an adult bear was trapped. She was released higher into the mountains.

Healy said it’s been a quiet year for bear nuisance calls – mostly because for the past three winters the abundance of moisture has meant enough food for the animals. Plus, people are slowly figuring out the appropriate ways to deal with their garbage so bears are not attracted to the rubbish.

The number of bear calls for the Northern Nevada area has not been tallied to day, but in 2007, there were 1,500 calls about problem bears.

Bears begin hibernating between Thanksgiving and Christmas. Right now they are loading up on calories – taking in up to 30,000 a day so sustain them through the winter. Normal is 3,000 to 5,000 calories a day.

“If there is not much of a snowpack, they will go into semi-

hibernation. They will wake up, follow a garbage truck and then go back sleep," Healy said. "That is why we always root for a big snowpack."