

Cubs rehabbed at LTWC return to the wild

By Marek Warszawski, Fresno Bee

SIERRA NATIONAL FOREST – Two orphaned bear cubs returned home to the mountains east of Fresno on Tuesday, nearly five months after a poacher killed their mother.

Campers found the two California black bear cubs Aug. 21 near the High Sierra Ranger Station on Kaiser Pass Road crying and suckling on their mother's carcass after she was killed illegally by a bow hunter.

The distraught male cubs were undernourished and underweight for their age at about 30 pounds apiece, so California Department of Fish and Game biologists determined they would not survive on their own. The cubs were captured and taken to Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care in South Lake Tahoe a nonprofit that raises and rehabilitates orphaned and injured wild animals and birds.

Named "The Fresno Brothers," the cubs spent their time in captivity fattening up on a diet consisting mainly of leafy vegetables, watermelon, sweet potatoes and live fish placed in tubs. To prevent them from bonding with humans, handlers avoided contact and placed their food out of sight.

"We want to help these bears survive and return to the population, but in doing so we must be sure they don't get used to being around people," DFG Bear Program coordinator Marc Kenyon said. "Once bears are no longer wary of people, they become nuisance bears that are no longer wild."

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