

# LTWC bobcats to continue rehabbing in Placerville

By Kaci Poor, Times-Standard

Chips, the bobcat kitten who attracted national attention after she was rescued by a Six Rivers National Forest Mad River Ranger District hand crew working the Chips Fire near Lake Almanor in July, has made a full recovery, a new friend and soon will have a new home.

Tom Millham, secretary and treasurer for the Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care, said the nearly 4-month-old bobcat has gained about six pounds and moved on from her diet of mushed mice to pork ribs, chicken thighs and baby chicks since arriving at the center in August.

"Chips is growing up to be just a normal little bobcat," he said.

LTWC Executive Director Cheryl Millham said Chips, who survived the fire that burned tens of thousands of acres in the Plumas and Lassen national forests, got a new roommate in late September. Sierra, a male bobcat estimated to be about one week older than Chips, came to the care center after he was found orphaned in Lassen County.

With plenty of energy, Cheryl Millham said she hopes Sierra will show Chips how to be a "proper bobcat."

Over one of the care center's webcams, the two young bobcats can be seen pouncing and tumbling across the obstacles in the bobcat enclosure as they wrestle with each other. Chips, a female and younger, appears to hold her own as she playfully bats at Sierra.

Cheryl Millham said the young bobcat has fully recovered from

the burns to her four tiny paws and an infection in her eyes since she was rescued by Mad River Hand Crew Superintendent Tad Hair, who said he found the young kitten as he was driving through a burnt swath of land on his way back to camp on Aug. 25.

"I got out of the truck, and I couldn't believe it," Hair said. "It was a kitten, a bobcat kitten."

Hair said he trailed the kitten through the dust for a few minutes before he decided to intervene. He could tell something was wrong. Alone, seemingly dazed and with second-degree burns on her paws, the kitten whimpered as Hair approached.

"I thought at first she was blind," Hair said. "Her eyes were full of soot and puss. I knew a mama cat would never have let that happen if she was around. At that point, I decided I had to do something."

After unsuccessfully trying to locate the kitten's mother, Hair contacted supervisors and brought the bobcat to the incident command post where officials arranged for her to be sent to the Lake Tahoe Wildlife Care.

Hair said he is glad to hear she is doing well and hopes to take his children down to visit the cat once she is settled into her new Placerville home.

Cheryl Millham, who served as Chips' primary caretaker when she was first brought to the Lake Tahoe center, said she and her husband will be sad to see the bobcat leave when both young bobcats are transferred to the Sierra Wildlife Rescue Center in Placerville sometime this week. With temperatures dropping in Tahoe, the two bobcats will be more comfortable in Placerville and able to continue playing outside, she said.

Barbara Barker, a volunteer coordinator at the Placerville rescue center, said her organization is excited to receive the

two young bobcats.

Barker said the pair will spend the winter under the care of a volunteer who specializes in rehabilitating foxes, coyotes and bobcats. She expects both young bobcats will be ready to be released back into the wild by spring.

"We can't wait to get them," Barker said. "We are all trying to do as much as we can to help out. There is just such a need to help these animals."